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Volume XX



"YOU'LL TAKE IT, WON'T YOU — JUST ONCE?"

THE NOVELS, STORIES
AND SKETCHES OF
F. HOPKINSON SMITH

KENNEDY
SQUARE

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S
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VOL. II

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CHAPTER XVII

THERE was no one at home when Harry returned except Todd, who, having kept his position outside the dining-room door during the heated encounter, had missed nothing of the interview. What had puzzled the darky—astounded him really—was that no pistol-shot had followed his master's denouncement and defiance of the Lord of Moorlands. What had puzzled him still more was hearing these same antagonists ten minutes later passing the time o' day, St. George bowing low and the colonel touching his hat as he passed out and down to where Matthew and his horses were waiting.

It was not surprising, therefore, that Todd's recital to Harry came in a more or less disjointed and disconnected form.

"You say, Todd," he exclaimed in astonishment, "that my father was here!" Our young hero was convinced that the visit did not concern himself, as he was no longer an object of interest to any one at home except his mother and Alec.

"Dat he was, sah, an' b'ilin' mad. Dey bofe

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was, on'y Marse George lay low an' de colonel purty nigh rid ober de top ob de fence. Fust Marse George sass him an' den de colonel sass him back. Purty soon Marse George say he gwineter speak his min'—an' he call de colonel a brute, an' den de colonel riz up an' say Marse George was a beggar an' a puttin' on airs when he didn't hab 'nough money to buy hisse'f a 'tater; an' den Marse George r'ared an' pitched—Oh! I tell ye he ken be mighty sof' an' per-simmony when he's tame—an' he's mos' allers dat way—but when his dander's up, an' it suttinly riz to-day, he kin make de fur fly. Dat's de time you wanten git outer de way or you'll git hurted."

"Who did you say was the beggar?" It was all Greek to Harry.

"Why, Marse George was—he was de one what was gwine hongry. De colonel 'lowed dat de bank was busted an'——"

"What bank?"

"Why de 'Tapsco—whar Marse George keep his money. Ain't you see me comin' from dar mos' ebery day?"

"But it hasn't failed, has it?" He was still wondering what the quarrel was about.

"Wall, I dunno, but I reckon sumpin's de matter, for no sooner did de colonel git on his

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horse an' ride away dan Marse George go git his hat an' coat hisse'f an' make tracks th'ou' de park by de short cut—an' you know he neber do dat 'cept when he's in a hurry, an' den in 'bout a ha'f hour he come back ag'in lookin' like he'd seed de yahoo, only he was mad plump th'ou'; den he hollered for me quick like, an' sont me down underneaf yere to Mr. Pawson to know was he in, an' he was, an' I done tol' him, an' he's dar now. He ain't neber done sont me down dar 'cept once sence I been yere, an' dat was de day dat Gadgem man come snuffin' roun'. Trouble comin'."

Harry had now begun to take in the situation. It was evidently a matter of some moment or Pawson would not have been consulted.

"I'll go down myself, Todd," he said with sudden resolve.

"Better lemme tell him you're yere, Marse Harry."

"No, I'll go now," and he turned on his heel and descended the front steps.

On the street side of the house, level with the bricks, was a door opening into a low-ceiled, shabbily furnished room, where in the old days General Dorsey Temple, as has been said, shared his toddies with his cronies. There he found St. George seated at a long table piled high with

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law books and papers—the top covered with a green baize cloth embroidered with mice holes and decorated with ink stains. Beside him was a thin, light-haired, young man, with a long, flexible neck and abnormally high forehead, overdoming a shrewd but not unkindly face. The two were poring over a collection of papers.

The young lawyer rose to his feet, a sickly, deferential smile playing along his straight lips. Young aristocrats of Harry's blood and breeding did not often darken Pawson's door, and he was extremely anxious that his guest should in some way be made aware of his appreciation of that fact. St. George did not move, nor did he take any other notice of the boy's appearance than to fasten his eyes upon him for a moment in recognition of his presence.

But Harry could not wait.

"Todd has just told me, Uncle George, that"—he caught the grave expression on Temple's face—"Why!—Uncle George—there isn't anything the matter, is there? It isn't true that the —"

St. George raised his head: "What isn't true, Harry?"

"That the Patapsco Bank is in trouble?"

"No, I don't think so. The bank, so far as I know, is all right; it's the depositors who are in

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trouble," and one of his quaint smiles lighted up his face.

"Broken!—failed!" cried Harry, still in doubt as to the extent of the catastrophe, but wishing to be sympathetic and proportionably astounded as any well-bred young man should be when his best friend was unhappy.

"I'm afraid it is, Harry—in fact I know it is—bankrupt in character as well as in balances—a bad-smelling, nasty mess, to tell you the truth. That's not only my own opinion, but the opinion of every man whom I have seen, and there was quite an angry mob when I reached the teller's window this morning. That is your own opinion also, is it not, Mr. Pawson?—your legal summing up, I mean."

The young attorney stretched out his spare colorless hands; opened wide his long, double-jointed fingers; pressed their ten little cushions together, and seesawing the bunch in front of his concave waistcoat, answered in his best professional voice:

"As to being bankrupt of funds I should say there was no doubt of that being their condition; as to any criminal intent or practices—that, of course, gentlemen"—and he shrugged his shoulders in a non-committal, non-actionable way—"is not for me to decide."

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“But you think it will be months, and perhaps years, before the depositors get a penny of their money—do you not?” persisted St. George.

Again Pawson performed the sleight-of-hand trick, and again he was non-committal—a second shrug alone expressing his views, the performance ending by his pushing a wooden chair in the direction of Harry, who was still on his feet.

Harry settled himself on its edge and fixed his eyes on his uncle. St. George again became absorbed in the several papers, Pawson once more assisting him, the visitor having now been duly provided for.

This raking of ashes in the hope of finding something of value unscorched was not a pleasant task for the young lawyer. He had, years before, conceived the greatest admiration for his landlord and was never tired of telling his associates of how kind and considerate St. George had always been, and of his patience in the earlier days of his lease, Mr. Temple often refusing the rent until he was quite ready to pay it. He took a certain pride, too, in living under the same roof, so to speak, with one universally known as a gentleman of the old school, whose birth, education, and habits made him the standard among his fellows—a man without pretence

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or sham, living a simple and wholesome life; with dogs, guns, priceless Madeira and Port, as well as unlimited clothes of various patterns adapted to every conceivable service and function—to say nothing of his being part of the best society that Kennedy Square could afford.

Even to bow to his distinguished landlord as he was descending his front steps was in itself one of his greatest pleasures. That he might not miss it, he would peer from behind his office shutters until the shapely legs of his patron could be seen between the twisted iron railing. Then appearing suddenly and with assumed surprise, he would lift his hat with so great a flourish that his long, thin arms and body were jerked into semaphore angles, his face meanwhile beaming with ill-concealed delight.

Should any one of St. George's personal friends accompany him—men like Kennedy, or General Hardisty, or some well-known man from the Eastern Shore—one of the Dennises, or Joyneses, or Irvings—the pleasure was intensified, the incident being of great professional advantage. "I have just met old General Hardisty," he would say—"he was at our house," the knowing ones passing a wink around, and the uninitiated having all the greater respect and, therefore, all the greater confidence in that rising

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young firm of "Pawson & Pawson, Attorneys and Counsellors at Law—Wills drawn and Estates looked after."

That this rarest of gentlemen, of all men in the world, should be made the victim of a group of schemers who had really tricked him of almost all that was left of his patrimony, and he a member of his own profession, was to Pawson one of the great sorrows of his life. That he himself had unwittingly helped in its culmination made it all the keener. Only a few weeks had passed since that eventful day when St. George had sent Todd down to arrange for an interview, an event which was followed almost immediately by that gentleman in person. He remembered his delight at the honor conferred upon him; he recalled how he had spent the whole of that and the next day in the attempt to negotiate the mortgage on the old home at a reasonable rate of interest; he recalled, too, how he could have lowered the rate had St. George allowed him more time. "No, pay it and get rid of them!" St. George had said, the "them" being part of the very accounts over which the two were poring. And his patron had shown the same impatience when it came to placing the money in the bank. Although his own lips were sealed professionally by reason of the interests of an-

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other client, he had begged St. George, almost to the verge of interference, not to give it to the Patapsco, until he had been silenced with: "Have them put it to my credit, sir. I have known every member of that bank for years."

All these things were, of course, unknown to Harry, the ultimate beneficiary. Who had filled the bucket, and how and why, were unimportant facts to him. That it was full, and ready for his use, brought with it the same sense of pleasure he would have felt on a hot day at Moorlands when he had gone to the old well, drawn up the ice-cold water, and, plunging in the sweet-smelling gourd, had drank to his heart's content.

This was what wells were made for; and so were fathers, and big, generous men like his Uncle George, who had dozens of friends ready to cram money into his pocket for him to hand over to whoever wanted it and without a moment's hesitation—just as Slater had handed him the money he needed when Gilbert wanted it in a hurry.

Nor could it be expected that Harry, even with the examination of St. George's accounts with the Patapsco and other institutions going on under his very eyes, understood fully just what a bank failure really meant. Half a dozen

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banks, he remembered, had gone to smash some few years before, sending his father to town one morning at daylight, where he stayed for a week, but no change, so far as he could recall, had happened because of it at Moorlands. Indeed, his father had bought a new coach for his mother the very next week, out of what he had "saved from the wreck," so he had told her.

It was not until the hurried overhauling of a mass of papers beneath his uncle's hand, and the subsequent finding of a certain stray sheet by Pawson, that the boy was aroused to a sense of the gravity of the situation. And even then his interest did not become acute until, the missing document identified, St. George had turned to Pawson and, pointing to an item half-way down the column, had said in a lowered tone, as if fearing to be overheard:

"You have the receipts, have you not, for everything on this list?—Slater's account too, and Hampson's?"

"They are in the file beside you, sir."

"Well, that's a comfort, anyhow."

"And the balance"—here he examined a small book which lay open beside him—"amounting to"—he paused—"is of course locked up in their vaults?"

Harry had craned his head in instant atten-

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tion. His quickened ears had caught two familiar names. It was Slater who had loaned him the five hundred dollars which he gave to Gilbert, which his father had commended him for borrowing; and it was Hampson who had sold him the wretched horse that had stumbled and broken his leg and had afterward to be shot.

“Slater, did you say, Uncle George—and Hampson? Aren’t they my old accounts?”

“Quite right, Mr. Rutter—quite right, sir.” St. George tried to stop him with a frown, but Pawson’s face was turned toward Harry and he failed to get the signal. “Quite right, and quite lucky; they were both important items in Mr. Gadgem’s list, and both checks passed through the bank and were paid before the smash came.”

The tones of Pawson’s voice, the twisting together of his bony hands in a sort of satisfied contentment, and the weary look on his uncle’s face were the opening of so many windows in the boy’s brain. At the same instant one of those creepy chills common to a man when some hitherto undiscovered vista of impending disaster widens out before him, started at the base of Harry’s spine, crept up his shoulder-blades, shivered along his arms, and lost itself in his

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benumbed fingers. This was followed by a lump in his throat that nearly strangled him. He left his chair and touched Pawson on the shoulder.

“Does this mean, Mr. Pawson—this money being locked up in the bank vaults and not coming out for months—and maybe never—does it mean that Mr. Temple—well, that Uncle George—won’t have enough money to live on?” There was an anxious, vibrant tone in Harry’s voice that aroused St. George to a sense of the boy’s share in the calamity and the privations he must suffer because of it. Pawson hesitated and was about to belittle the gravity of the situation when St. George stopped him.

“Yes—tell him—tell him everything, I have no secrets from Mr. Rutter. Stop!—I’ll tell him. It means, Harry”—and a brave smile played about his lips—“that we will have to live on hog and hominy, maybe, or pretty nigh it—certainly for a while—not bad, old fellow, when you get accustomed to it. Aunt Jemima makes very good hominy and——”

He stopped; the brave smile had faded from his face.

“By Jove!—that’s something I didn’t think of!— What will I do with the dear old woman— It would break her heart—and Todd?”

Here was indeed something on which he had

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not counted! For him to forego the luxuries that enriched his daily life was easy—he had often in his hunting trips lived for weeks on sweet potato and a handful of cornmeal, and slept on the bare ground with only a blanket over him, but that his servants should be reduced to similar privations suggested possibilities which appalled him. For the first time since the cruel announcement fell from Rutter's lips the real situation, with all that it meant to his own future and those dependent upon him, stared him in the face.

He looked up and caught Harry's anxious eyes scanning his own. His old-time, unruffled spirit came to his assistance.

"No, son!" he cried in his cheeriest voice, springing to his feet—"no, we won't worry. It will all come out right—we'll buckle down to it together, you and I. Don't take it too much to heart—we'll get on somehow."

But the boy was not reassured; in fact, he had become more anxious than ever. Not only did the chill continue, but the lump in his throat grew larger every minute.

"But, Uncle George—you told me you borrowed the money to pay those bills my father sent me. And will you now have to pay that back as well?" He did not ask of whom he

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had borrowed it, nor on what security, nor would either Pawson or his uncle have told him, that being a confidential matter.

"Well, that depends, Harry; but we won't have to pay it right away, which is one comfort. And then again, I can go back to the law. I have yet to make my maiden speech before a jury, but I can do it. Think of it!—everybody in tears, the judge mopping his eyes—court-room breathless. Oh, you just wait until your old uncle gets on his feet before a bench and jury. Come along, old fellow—let us go up into the house." Then in a serious tone—his back to Harry—"Pawson, please bring the full accounts with you in the morning, and now let me thank you for your courtesy. You have been extremely civil, sir, and I appreciate it most highly."

When they had reached the front walk and were about to climb the immaculate steps, St. George, still determined to divert the boy's thoughts from his own financial straits, said with a laugh:

"Todd told you, of course, about your father paying me a visit this morning, did he not?"

"Oh, yes!—a most extraordinary account. You must have enjoyed it," replied Harry, trying to fall into his uncle's mood, his heart

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growing heavier every moment. "What did he want?"

One of St. George's heat-lightning smiles played over his face: "He wanted two things. He first wanted you, and then he wanted a receipt for a month's board—*your* board, remember! He went away without either."

A new perspective suddenly opened up in Harry's mind; one that had a gleam of sunshine athwart it.

"But, Uncle George!" he burst out—"don't forget that my father owes you all the money you paid for me! That, of course, will eventually come back to you." This came in a tone of great relief, as if the money was already in his hand.

St. George's face hardened. "None of it will come back to me," he rejoined in a positive tone. "He doesn't owe me one single penny and he never will. That money he owes to you. Whatever you may happen to owe me can wait until you are able to pay it. And now while I am talking about it, there is another thing your father owes you, and that is an humble apology, and that he will pay one of these days in tears and agony. You are neither a beggar nor a cringing dog, and you will never be so long as I can help it!" He stopped, rested

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his hand on the boy's shoulder, and with a quiver in his voice added :

"Your hand, my son. Short commons after this, maybe, but we will make the fight together."

When the two passed through the front door and stepped into the dining-room they found it filled with gentlemen—friends who had heard of the crash and who had come either to extend their sympathy or offer their bank accounts. They had heard of the catastrophe at the club and had instantly left their seats and walked across the park in a body.

To one and all St. George gave a warm pressure of the hand and a bright smile. Had he been the master of ceremonies at a state reception he could not have been more self-possessed or more gallant; his troubles were for himself, never for his guests.

"All in a lifetime—but I am not worrying. The Patapsco pulled out once before and it may again. My only regret is that I cannot, at least for a time, have as many of you as I would wish under my mahogany. But don't let us borrow any trouble; certainly not to-day. Todd, get some glasses and bring me that bottle of Madeira—the one there on the sideboard!" Here he took the precious fluid from Todd's hand and

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holding high the crusted bottle said with a dry smile—one his friends knew when his irony was aroused: “That wine, gentlemen, saw the light at a time when a man locked his money in an iron box to keep outside thieves from stealing it; to-day he locks his money in a bank’s vault and locks the thieves in with it. Extraordinary, is it not, how we gentlemen trust each other? Here, Todd, draw the cork! . . . Slowly. . . . Now hand me the bottle—yes—Clayton, that’s the same wine that you and Kennedy liked so much the night we had Mr. Poe with us. It is really about all there is left of my father’s Black Warrior of 1810. I thought it was all gone, but Todd found two more the other day, one of which I sent to Kennedy. This is the other. Kennedy writes me he is keeping his until we can drink it together. Is everybody’s glass full? Then my old toast if you will permit me: ‘Here’s to love and laughter, and every true friend of my true friend my own!’”

Before the groups had dispersed Harry had the facts in his possession—principally from Judge Pancoast, who gave him a full account of the bank’s collapse, some papers having been handed up to him on the bench that morning. Summed up, his uncle was practically ruined—

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and he, Harry, was the cause of it—the innocent cause, perhaps, but the cause all the same: but for his father's cruelty and his own debts St. George would never have mortgaged his home. That an additional sum—his uncle's entire deposit—had been swallowed up in the crash was but part of the same misfortune. Poe's lines were true, then—never so true as now:

“Some unhappy master whom unmerciful disaster
Followed fast and followed faster . . .”

This, then, was ever after to be his place in life—to bring misery wherever he went.

He caught up his hat and walked through the park beside the judge, hoping for some further details of his uncle's present plight and future condition, but the only thing his Honor added to what he already knew was his wonderment over the fact that St. George, having no immediate use for the money except to pay his bills, should have raised so large a sum on a mortgage instead of borrowing it from his friends. It was here that Harry's heart gave a bound:—no one, then, but his uncle, Pawson, and himself knew that he alone was responsible for the catastrophe! That his father should have learned of his share in it did not enter the boy's head.

Todd answered his knock on his return, and

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in reply to his inquiry informed him that he must not sit up, as "Marse George" had left word that he would be detained until late at a meeting of the creditors of the bank.

And so the unhappy lad, his supper over, sought his bed and, as had occurred more than once before, spent the earlier hours of the night gazing at the ceiling and wondering what would become of him.

CHAPTER XVIII

WITH the breaking of the dawn Harry's mind was made up. Before the sun was an hour high he had dressed hurriedly, stolen downstairs so as to wake no one, and closing the front door softly behind him had taken the long path through the park in the direction of the wharves. Once there, he made the rounds of the shipping offices from Light Street wharf to the Falls—and by the time St. George had finished dressing—certainly before he was through his coffee—had entered the name of Henry Rutter on two sets of books—one for a position as supercargo and the other, should nothing better be open, as common seaman. All he insisted upon was that the ship should sail at once. As to the destination, that was of no consequence, nor did the length of the voyage make any difference. He remembered that his intimate friend, Gilbert, had some months before gone as supercargo to China, his father wanting him to see something of the world; and if a similar position were open he could, of course, give references as to his character—a question the agent asked him

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—but, then, Gilbert had a father to help him. Should no such position be available, he would ship before the mast, or serve as cook or cabin-boy, or even scullion—but he would not live another day or hour dependent on his dear Uncle George, who had impoverished himself in his behalf.

He selected the sea instead of going into the army as a common soldier because the sea had always appealed to him. He loved its freedom and its dangers. Then again, he was young and strong—could climb like a cat—sail a boat—swim—Yes!—the sea was the place! He could get far enough away behind its horizons to hide the struggle he must make to accomplish the one purpose of his life—the earning of his debt.

Filled with this idea he began to perfect his plans, determining to take no one into his confidence until the day before the ship was ready to sail. He would then send for his mother and Alec—bring them all down to St. George's house and announce his intention. That was the best and wisest way. As for Kate—who had now been at home some weeks—he would pour out his heart to her in a letter. This was better than an interview, which she would doubtless refuse:—a letter she would be obliged to read and, perhaps, answer. As for his dear Uncle

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George—it would be like tearing his heart out to leave him, but this wrench had to be met and it was best to do it quickly and have done with it.

When this last thought took possession a sudden faintness crept over him. How could he leave his uncle? What St. George was to him no one but himself knew—father, friend, comrade, adviser—standard of men and morals—all and more was his beloved uncle. No thought of his heart but he had given him, and never once had he been misunderstood. He could put his arm about his uncle's neck as he would about his mother's and not be thought effeminate or childish. And the courtesy and dignity and fairness with which he had been treated; and the respect St. George showed him—and he only a boy: compelling his older men friends to do the same. Never letting him feel that any foolish act of his young life had been criticised, or that any one had ever thought the less of him because of them.

Breakfast over, during which no allusion was made either to what St. George had accomplished at the conference of the creditors the night before, or to Harry's early rising—the boy made his way into the park and took the path he loved. It was autumn, and the mild morning air bespoke an Indian summer day. Passing beneath the

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lusty magnolias, which flaunted here and there their glossy leaves, he paused under one of the big oaks, whose branches, stripped of most of their foliage, still sheltered a small, vine-covered arbor where he and Kate had often sat—indeed, it was within its cool shade that he had first told her of his love. Here he settled himself on a small wooden bench outside the retreat and gave his thoughts full rein—not to repine, nor to revive his troubles, which he meant to put behind him—but to plan out the letter he was to write Kate. This must be clear and convincing and tell the whole story of his heart. That he might empty it the better he had chosen this place made sacred by her presence. Then again, the park was generally deserted at this hour—the hour between the passing of the men of business and the coming of the children and nurses—and he would not be interrupted—certainly not before this arbor—one off by itself and away from passers-by.

He seated himself on the bench, his eyes overlooking the park. All the hours he had passed with Kate beneath the wide-spreading trees rose in his mind; the day they had read aloud to each other, her pretty feet tucked under her so that the dreadful ants couldn't touch her dainty stockings; the morning when she was late and he had waited and fumed, stretching minutes into hours

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in his impatience; that summer night when the two had hidden behind the big oak so that he could kiss her good-night and none of the others see.

With these memories stirring, his letter was forgotten, and his head dropped upon his breast, as if the weight of all he had lost was greater than he could bear. Grasping his walking-stick the tighter he began tracing figures in the gravel, his thoughts following each line. Suddenly his ears caught the sound of a quick step—one he thought strangely familiar.

He raised his eyes.

Kate had passed him and had given no sign of her presence!

He sprang from his seat:

“Kate!—*Kate!*— Are you going to treat me as my father treated me! Don’t, please!— You’ll never see me again—but don’t cut me like that: I have never done anything but love you!”

The girl came to a halt, but she did not turn her head, nor did she answer.

“Please, Kate—won’t you speak to me? It may be the last time I shall ever see you. I am going away from Kennedy Square. I was going to write you a letter; I came out here to think of what I ought to say——”

She raised her head and half turned her trem-

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bling body so that she could see his face, her eyes reading his.

"I didn't think you wanted me to speak to you or you would have looked up."

"I didn't see you until you had passed. Can't we sit down here?—no one will see us."

She suffered him to take her hand and lead her to the bench. There she sat, her eyes still searching his face—a wondering, eager look, discovering every moment some old remembered spot—an eyebrow, or the line at the corner of the mouth, or the round of the cheek—each and every one bringing back to her the days that were past and gone never to return.

"You are going away?" she said at last—"why? Aren't you happy with Uncle George? He would miss you, I am sure." She had let the scarf fall from her shoulders as she spoke, bringing into view the full round of her exquisite throat. He had caught its flash, but he could not trust himself to look the closer.

"Not any more than I shall miss him," he rejoined sadly; "but he has lost almost everything he had in the bank failure and I cannot have him support me any longer—so I am going to sea."

Kate started forward and laid her hand on his wrist: "To sea!—in a ship! Where?" The inquiry came with such suddenness and with so

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keen a note of pain in her voice that Harry's heart gave a bound. It was not St. George's losses then she was thinking of—she was thinking of him! He raised his eyes quickly and studied her face the closer; then his heart sank again. No!—he was wrong—there was only wonder in her gaze; only her usual curiosity to know every detail of what was going on around her.

With a sigh he resumed his bent position, talking to the end of his walking-stick tracing figures in the gravel. "I shall go to Rio, probably," he continued in the same despondent tone—"or China. That's why I called after you. I sail day after to-morrow—Saturday at the latest—and it may be a good many years before I get back again, and so I didn't want to go, Kate, without telling you that—that—I forgive you for everything you have done to me—and whether you forgive me or not, I have kept my promises to you, and I will always keep them as long as I live."

"What does dear Uncle George think of it?" She too was addressing the end of the stick; gaining time to make up her mind what to do and say. The old wound, of course, could not be opened, but she might save him and herself from fresh ones.

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“He doesn’t know I am going; nobody knows but you. I have been a curse to every one who has been kind to me, and I am going now where there will be nobody but strangers about me. To leave Uncle George breaks my heart, but so does it break my heart to leave my precious mother and dear old Alec, who cries all the time and has now taken to his bed, I hear.”

She waited, but her name was not added to the list, nor did he raise his head.

“I deserve it all, I suspect,” he went on, “or it wouldn’t be sent to me; but it’s over now. If I ever come back it will be when I am satisfied with myself; if I never come back, why then my former hard luck has followed me—that’s all. And now may I talk to you, Kate, as I used to do sometimes?” He straightened up, threw down his cane, and turned his shoulders so he could look her squarely in the eyes. “If I say anything that offends you you can get up and walk away and I won’t follow you, nor will I add another word. You may never see me again, and if it is not what I ought to say, you can forget it all when I am gone. Kate!”—he paused, and for a moment it was all he could do to control himself. “What I want to tell you first is this—that I haven’t had a happy day or hour since that night on the stairs in my father’s house.

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Whether I was right or wrong I don't know; what followed is what I couldn't help, but that part I don't regret, and if any one should behave to you as Willits did I would do it over again. What I do regret is the pain it has caused you. And now here comes this awful sorrow to Uncle George, and I am the cause of that too."

She turned her face quickly, the color leaving her cheeks as if alarmed. Had he been behaving badly again? But he swept it away with his next sentence.

"You see, my father refused to pay any of the bills I owed and Uncle George paid them for me—and I can't have that go on a day longer—certainly not now."

Kate's shoulders relaxed. A sigh of relief spent itself; Harry was still an honest gentleman, whatever else he might have done!

"And now comes the worst of it, Kate." His voice sank almost to a whisper, as if even the birds should not hear this part of his confession: "Yes—the worst of it—that I have had all this to suffer—all this misery to endure—all these insults of my father to bear without you! Always, before, we have talked things out together; then you were shut away and I could only look up at your windows and rack my brain wondering where you were and what you were doing. It's

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all over now—you love somebody else—but I shall never love anybody else: I can't! I don't want to! You are the last thing I kiss before I close my eyes; I shut them and kiss only the air—but it is your lips I feel; and you are the first thing I open them upon when I wake. It will always be so, Kate—you are my body, my soul, and my life. I shall never have you again, I know, but I shall have your memory, and that is sweeter and more precious to me than all else in the world!"

"Harry!" There was a strange cadence in her voice—not of self-defence—not of recrimination—only of overwhelming pity: "Don't you think that I too have had my troubles? Do you think it was nothing to me to love you as I did and have—" She stopped, drew in her breath as if to bolster up some inward resolution, and then with a brave lift of the head added: "No, I won't go into that—not to-day."

"Yes—tell me all of it—you can't hurt me more than you have done. But you may be right—no, we won't talk of that part of it. And now, Kate, I won't ask you to stay any longer; I am glad I saw you—it was better than writing." He leaned forward: "Let me look into your face once more, won't you?—so I can remember the better. . . . Yes—the same dear

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eyes—and the hair growing low on the temples, and the beautiful mouth and—No—I sha'n't forget—I never have.” He rose from his seat and held out his hand: “You'll take it, won't you?—just once— Good-by!”

She had not moved, nor had she grasped his hand; her face was still toward him, her whole frame tense, the tears crowding to the lids.

“Sit down, Harry. I can't let you go like this. Tell me something more of where you are going. Why must you go to sea? Can't you support yourself here?—isn't there something you can get to do? I will see my father and find out if——”

“No, you won't.” There was a note almost of defiance in his voice—one she had never heard before. “I am through with accepting favors from any living man. Hereafter I stand in my own shoes, independent of everybody. My father is the only person who has a right to give me help, and as he refuses absolutely to do anything more than pay my board, I must fall back on myself. I didn't see these things in this same way when Uncle George paid my debts, or even when he took me into his home as his guest, but I do now.”

Something gave a little bound in Kate's heart. This manly independence was one of the things

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she had in the old days hoped was in him. What had come over her former lover, she wondered.

“And another thing, Kate”—she was listening eagerly—she could not believe it was Harry who was speaking—“if you were to tell me this moment that you loved me again and would marry me, and I still be as I am to-day—outlawed by my father and dependent on charity—I would not do it. I can’t live on your money, and I have none of my own. Furthermore, I owe dear Uncle George his money in such a way that I can never pay it back except I earn it, and that I can’t do here. To borrow it of somebody else to pay him would be more disgraceful still.”

Again her heart gave a bound. Her father had followed the opposite course, and she knew for a certainty just what some men thought of him, and she could as easily recall half a dozen younger men who had that very summer been willing to play the same game with herself. Something warm and sympathetic struggled up through her reserve.

“Would you stay, Harry, if I asked you to?” she said in almost a whisper. She had not meant to put the question quite in that way, but somehow it had asked itself.

He looked at her with his soft brown eyes, the long lashes shading their tender brilliancy. He

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had guessed nothing of the newly awakened throb in her heart; only his situation stared him in the face, and in this she had no controlling interest; nor could she now that she loved somebody else.

"No, Kate, it wouldn't alter anything. It would be putting off the day when it would all have to be done over again; and then it would be still worse because of the hopes it had raised."

"Do you really mean, Harry, that you would not stay if I asked you?" It was not her heart which was speaking, but the pride of the woman who had always had her own way.

"I certainly do," he answered emphatically, his voice ringing clear. "Every day I lose is just so much taken from a decent, independent life."

A sudden revulsion of feeling swept through her. This was the last thing she had expected from Harry. What had come over him that he should deny her anything?—he who had always obeyed her slightest wish. Then a new thought entered her head—why should she humble herself to ask any more questions? With a quick movement she gained her feet and stood toying with her dress, arranging the lace scarf about her throat, tightening the wide strings that held her teacup of a bonnet close to her face. She raised her eyes and stole a glance at him. The lips

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were still firmly set with the resolve that had tightened them, but his eyes were brimming tears.

As suddenly as her pride had risen did it die out. All the tenderness of her nature welled up. She made one step in his direction. She was about to speak, but he had not moved, nor did his face relax. She saw that nothing could shake his resolve; they were as far apart as if the seas already rolled between them. She held out her hand, and with that same note of infinite pathos which he knew so well when she spoke straight from her heart, said as she laid her fingers in his:

“Good-by, and God bless you, Harry.”

“Good-by, Kate,” he murmured in barely audible tones. “May I—may I—kiss you on the forehead, as I always used to do when I left you——”

She bent her head: he leaned over and touched the spot with his lips as reverently as a sinner kisses the garment of a saint, then, choking down her tears, all her body unstrung, her mind in a whirl, she turned and passed out of the park.

That same afternoon Kate called her father into her little sitting-room at the top of the stairs and shut the door.

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"Harry Rutter is going to sea as a common sailor on one of the ships leaving here in a couple of days. Can you find out which one?—it may be one of your own." He was still perfunctory agent of the line.

"Young Rutter going to sea!"—the nomenclature of "my dear Harry" had ended since the colonel had disinherited him. "Well—that *is* news! I suspect that will be the best place for him; then if he plays any of his pranks there will be somebody around with a cat-o'-nine-tails to take it out of him. Going to sea, is he?"

Kate looked at him with lowered lids, her lips curling slightly, but she did not defend the culprit. It was only one of what Prim called his "jokes": he was the last man in the world to wish any such punishment. Moreover, she knew her father much better than the Honorable Prim knew his daughter, and whenever she had a favor to ask was invariably careful not to let his little tea-kettle boil over.

"Only a short time ago, father, you got a berth as supercargo on one of my grandfather's ships for Mark Gilbert. Can't you do it for Harry?"

"But, Kate, that was quite a different thing. Mark's father came to me and asked it as a special favor." His assumed authority at the

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shipping office rarely extended to the appointing of officers—not when the younger partners objected.

“Well, Harry’s father won’t come to you, nor will Harry; and it isn’t a different thing. It’s exactly the same thing so far as you are concerned, and there is a greater reason for Harry, for he is alone in the world and he is not used to hard work of any kind, and it is cruel to make a common sailor of him.”

“Why, I thought Temple was fathering him.”

“So Uncle George has, and would always look after him, but Harry is too brave and manly to live upon him any longer, now that Uncle George has lost most of his money. Will you see Mr. Pendergast, or shall I go down to the office?”

Prim mused for a moment. “There may not be a vacancy,” he ventured, “but I will inquire. The *Ranger* sails on Friday for the River Plate, and I will have Mr. Pendergast come and see me. Supercargoes are of very little use, my dear, unless they have had some business training, and this young man, of course, has had none at all.”

“This young man, indeed!” thought Kate with a sigh, stifling her indignation. “Poor Harry!—no one need treat him any longer with

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even common courtesy, now that St. George, his last hold, had been swept away."

"I think on the whole I had better attend to it myself," she added with some impatience.

"I don't want anything to go wrong about it."

"No, I'll see him, Kate; just leave it all to me."

He had already decided what to do—or what he would try to do—when he first heard the boy wanted to leave the country. What troubled him was what the managing partner of the line might think of the proposition. As long as Harry remained at home and within reach any number of things might happen—even a return of the old love. With the scapegrace half-way around the world some other man might have a chance—Willits, especially, who had proved himself in every way worthy of his daughter, and who would soon be one of the leading lawyers of the State if he kept on.

With the closing of the door upon her father, Kate threw herself upon her lounge. One by one the salient features of her interview with Harry passed in review: his pleading for some word of comfort; some note of forgiveness with which to cheer the hours of his exile.—"You are the last thing I kiss before I close my eyes." Then his open defiance of her expressed wishes when they conflicted with his own set purpose

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of going away and staying away until he made up his mind to return. While the first brought with it a certain contented satisfaction—something she had expected and was glad of—the last aroused only indignation and revolt. Her brow tightened, and the determination of the old seadog—her grandfather Barkeley—played over her countenance. She no longer, then, filled Harry's life, controlling all his actions; she no longer inspired his hopes. Rather than marry her he would work as a common sailor. Yes—he had said so, and with his head up and his voice ringing brave and clear. She was proud of him for it—she had never been so proud of him—but why no trace of herself in his resolve, except in his allusion to the duel, when he said he would do it again should any one insult her? It was courteous, of course, for him to feel that way, however much she abhorred the system of settling such disputes. But, then, he would do that for any other woman—would, no doubt, for some woman he had not yet seen. In this he was the son of his father and the same Harry—but in everything else he was a changed man—and never more changed than in his attitude toward her.

With these thoughts racking her brain she rose from the lounge and began pacing the floor, peering out between the curtains of her room, her

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eyes wandering over the park as if she could still see him between the branches. Then her mind cleared and the true situation developed itself:—for months she had hugged to herself the comforting thought that she had only to stretch out her hand and bring him to her feet. He had now looked her full in the face and proclaimed his freedom. It was as if she had caged a bird and found the door open and the prisoner singing in a tree overhead.

That same night she sat by her wood fire in her chamber, her old black mammy—Mammy Henny—bending close, combing out her marvellous hair. She had been studying the coals, watching the little castles pile and fall; the quick smothering of slowly fading sparks under a blanket of gray ashes, and the wavering, flickering light that died on the curling smoke. She had not spoken for a long time, when the old woman roused her.

“Whar was you dis mawnin’, honey chile? Mister Willits done wait mo’n ha’f a hour, den he say he come back an’ fetch his sorrel horse wid him dis arternoon an’ take ye ridin’. But he ain’t come—dat is, Ben done tol’ me so.”

“No, mammy,” she answered wearily—“I sent him word not to—I didn’t feel like riding to-day.”

CHAPTER XIX

OVER two years have passed away since that mournful night when Harry with his hand in St. George's, his voicing choking, had declared his determination to leave him the next day and seek his fortunes across the seas.

It was a cruel blow to Temple, coming as it did on the heels of his own disaster, but when the first shock had passed he could but admire the lad for his pluck and love him the better for his independence.

"All right, my son," he had said, concealing as best he could his intense suffering over the loss of his companion. "I'll try and get along. But remember I am here—and the door is always open. I don't blame you—I would do the same thing were I in your place. And now about Kate—what shall I say to her?"

"Nothing. I said it all this morning. She doesn't love me any more—she would have passed me by without speaking had I not called to her. She'll be married to Willits before I come back—if I ever do come back. But leaving Kate is easier than leaving you. You have

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stuck to me all the way through, and Kate—well—perhaps she hasn't understood—perhaps her father has been talking to her—I don't know. Anyhow, it's all over. If I had had any doubts about it before, this morning's talk settled it. The sea is the best place for me. I can support myself anyway for a while until I can help you."

Yes! the boy was right, St. George had said to himself. It was all over between them. Kate's reason had triumphed at last. She, perhaps, was not to blame. Her experiences had been trying and she was still confronted by influences bitterly opposed to Harry, and largely in favor of Willits, for, weak specimen as Prim was, he was still her father, and in so important a step as her marriage, must naturally exercise authority. As for his own influence, that, he realized, had come to an end at their last interview: the whole thing, he must admit, was disappointing—cruelly so—the keenest disappointment of his life.

Many a night since he bid Harry good-by had he sat alone by that same fire, his dogs his only companions, the boy's words ringing in his ears: "Leaving Kate is easier than leaving you!" Had it been the other way and he the exile, it would have been nearer the truth, he often thought, for nothing in his whole life had left so great a void in his heart as the loss of the boy

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he loved. Not that he was ever completely disheartened; that was not his nature; there was always daylight ahead—the day when Harry would come back and their old life begin again. With this in store for him he had led his life as best he could, visiting his friends in the country, entertaining in a simple, inexpensive way, hunting at Wesley, where he and Peggy Coston would exchange confidences and funny stories; dining out; fishing in the early spring; getting poorer and poorer in pocket, and yet never complaining, his philosophy being that it would be brighter in the morning, and it always was—to him.

And yet if the truth be told his own situation had not improved—in fact, it had grown steadily worse. Only one payment of interest had been made on the mortgage and the owner was already threatening foreclosure proceedings. Pawson's intervention alone had staved off the fatal climax by promising the holder to keep the loan alive by the collection of some old debts—borrowed money and the like—due St. George for years and which his good nature had allowed to run on indefinitely until some of them were practically outlawed. Indeed it was only through resources like this, in all of which Pawson helped, and with the collecting of some small ground

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rents, that kept Todd and Jemima in their places and the larder comfortably filled. As to the bank—there was still hope that some small percentage would be paid the depositors, it being the general opinion that the directors were personally liable because of the irregularities which the smash had uncovered—but this would take months, if not years, to work out.

His greatest comfort was in the wanderer's letters. These he would watch for with the eagerness of a girl hungry for news of her distant lover. For the first few months these came by every possible mail, most of them directed to himself; others to his mother, Mrs. Rutter driving in from Moorlands to compare notes with St. George. Then, as the boy made his way further into the interior the intervals were greater—sometimes a month passed without news of him.

"We are short-handed," he wrote St. George, "owing to fever on the voyage out on the *Ranger*, and though I am supercargo and sit at the captain's table, I have to turn to and work like any of the others—fine exercise, but my hands are cracked and blistered and full of tar. I'll have to wear gloves the next time I dine with you."

Not a word of this to his mother—no such hardships for her tender ears:

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“Tell me about Kate, mother”—this from Rio—“how she looks; what she says; does she ever mention my name? My love to Alec. Is Matthew still caring for Spitfire, or has my father sold her?” Then followed the line: “Give my father my respectful regards; I would send my love, but he no longer cares for it.”

The dear lady did not deliver the message. Indeed Harry's departure had so widened the breach between the colonel and herself that they practically occupied different parts of the house as far removed from each other as possible. She had denounced him first to his face for the boy's self-imposed exile, and again behind his back to her intimates. Nor did her resolve waver even when the colonel was thrown from his horse and so badly hurt that his eyesight was greatly impaired. “It is a judgment on you,” she had said, drawing her frail body up to its full height; “you will now learn what other people suffer,” and would have kept on upstairs to her own room had not her heart softened at his helplessness—a new rôle for the colonel.

He had made no answer at the time: he never answered her back. She was too frail to be angry with, and then she was right about his being the cause of her suffering—the first cause of it, at least. He had not yet arrived at the point where

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he censured himself for all that had happened. In fact, since Harry's sudden exit, made without a word to anybody at Moorlands except his mother and Alec, who went to town on a hurry message,—a slight which cut him to the quick—he had steadily laid the blame on everybody else connected with the affair;—generally on St. George for his interference in his peace-making programme at the club and his refusal, when ruined financially, to send the boy back to him in an humble and contrite spirit. Neither had he recovered from the wrath he had felt when, having sent John Gorsuch to ascertain from St. George the amount of money he had paid out for his son, Temple had politely sent Gorsuch, in charge of Todd, downstairs to Pawson, who in turn, after listening to Todd's whispered message, had with equal politeness shown Gorsuch the door, the colonel's signed check—the amount unfilled—still in Gorsuch's pocket.

It was only when the Lord of Moorlands went into town to spend an hour or so with Kate—and he was a frequent visitor prior to his accident—that his old manner returned. He loved the girl dearly and was never tired of talking to her. She was the only woman who would listen when he poured out his heart.

And Kate always welcomed him gladly. She

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liked strong, decided men even if they sometimes erred in their conclusions. Her grandfather, old Captain Barkeley, had had the same masterfulness. He had been in absolute command in his earlier years, and he had kept in command all his life. His word was law, and he was generally right. She was twelve years old when he died, and had, therefore, ample opportunity to know. It was her grandfather's strong personality, in fact, which had given her so clear an idea of her father's many weaknesses. Rutter, she felt, was a combination of both Barkeley and Prim—forceful and yet warped by prejudices; dominating yet intolerant; able to do big things and contented with little ones. It was forcefulness, despite his many shortcomings, which most appealed to her.

Moreover, she saw much of Harry in him. It was that which made her so willing to listen—she continually comparing the father to the son. These comparisons were invariably made in a circle, beginning at Rutter's brown eyes, taking in his features and peculiarities—many of them reproduced in his son's—such as the firm set of the lips and the square line of the chin—and ending, quite naturally, with the brown orbs again. While Harry's matched the color and shape, and often the fierce glare of the father's,

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they could also, she said to herself, shine with the soft light of the mother's. It was from the mother's side, then, that there came the willingness to yield to whatever tempted him—it may be to drink—to a false sense of honor—to herself: Harry being her slave instead of her master. And the other men around her—so far as yielding was concerned (here her brow would tighten and her lips straighten)—were no better. Even Uncle George must take her own “No” for an answer and believe it when she meant quite a different thing. And once more would her soul break out in revolt over the web in which she had become entangled, and once more would she cry herself to sleep.

Nobody but her old black mammy knew how tragic had been her sufferings, how many bitter hours she had passed, nor how many bitter tears she had shed. Yet even old Henny could not comfort her, nor was there any one else to whom the girl could pour out her heart. She had, it is true, kept up her intimacy with her Uncle George—hardly a week passed that she was not a visitor at his house or he at hers—but they had long since refrained from discussing Harry. Not because he did not want to talk about him, but because she would not let him—Of course not!

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To Richard Horn, however, strange to say, she often turned—not so much for confidences as for a broader understanding of life. The thoughtful inventor was not so hedged about by social restrictions, and would break out in spontaneous admiration of Harry, saying with a decisive nod of his head, “A fine, splendid young fellow, my dear Kate; I recognized it first at St. George’s dinner to Mr. Poe, and if I may say so, a much-abused young man whose only sin is that he, like many another about us, has been born under a waning star in a sky full of murky clouds; one that the fresh breeze of a new civilization will some day clear away”—a deduction which Kate could not quite grasp, but which comforted her greatly.

It delighted her, too, to hear him talk of the notable occurrences taking place about them. “You are wonderfully intelligent, my dear,” he had said to her on one occasion, “and should miss nothing of the developments that are going on about us;” and in proof of it had the very next day taken her to an exhibition of Mr. Morse’s new telegraph, given at the Institute, at which two operators, each with an instrument, the men in sight of each other, but too far apart to be in collusion, were sending and answering the messages through wires stretched around the hall.

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She, at Richard's suggestion, had written a message herself, which she handed to the nearest operator who had ticked it to his fellow, and who at once read it to the audience. Even then many doubting Thomases had cried out "Collusion," until Richard, rising in his seat, had not only endorsed the truth of the reading, but explained the invention, his statement silencing all opposition because of his well-known standing and knowledge of kindred sciences.

Richard's readings also, from which Kate was never absent, and which had now been resumed at his own house, greatly interested her. These of late had been devoted to many of Poe's earlier poems and later tales, for despite the scene at St. George's the inventor had never ceased to believe in the poet.

And so with these occupations, studies, investigations, and social pleasures—she never missing a ball or party (Willits always managing to be with her)—and the spending of the summer months at the Red Sulphur, where she had been pursued by half a dozen admirers—one a titled Englishman—had the days and hours of the years of Harry's absence passed slowly away.

At the end of the second winter a slight change occurred in the monotony of her life. Her constant, unwavering devotee, Langdon

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Willits, fell ill and had to be taken to the Eastern Shore, where the same old lot of bandages—that is of the same pattern—and the same loyal sister were impressed into service to nurse him back to health. The furrow Harry's bullet had ploughed in his head still troubled him at times, especially in the hot weather, and a horseback ride beside Kate one August day, with the heat in the nineties, had started the subsoil of his cranium to aching with such vehemence that Teackle had promptly packed it in ice and ten days later its owner in blankets and had put them both aboard the bay boat bound for the Eastern Shore.

Whether this new irritant—and everything seemed to annoy her now—had begun to tell on our beautiful Kate, or whether the gayety of the winter both at home and in Washington, where she had spent some weeks during the season, had tired her out, certain it was that when the spring came the life had gone out of her step and the color from her cheeks. Mammy Henny had noticed it and had coddled her the more, crooning and petting her; and her father had noticed it and had begun to be anxious, and at last St. George had stalked in and cried out in that breezy, joyous way of his that nothing daunted:

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“Here, you sweetheart!—what have you been doing to your cheeks—all the roses out of them and pale as two lilies—and you never out of bed until twelve o’clock in the day and looking then as if you hadn’t had a wink of sleep all night. Not a word out of you, Seymour, until I’ve finished. I’m going to take Kate down to Tom Coston’s and keep her there till she gets well. Too many stuffy balls—too many late suppers—oyster roasts and high doings. None of that at Tom’s. Up at six and to bed at ten. I’ve just had a letter from him and dear Peggy is crazy to have us come. Take your mare along, Kate, and you won’t lack fresh air. Now what do you say, Seymour?”

Of course the Honorable Prim bobbed his honorable head and said he had been worried himself over Kate’s loss of appetite, and that if Temple would, etc., etc.—he would—etc., etc.—and so Mammy Henny began to get pink and white and other fluffy things together, and Ben, with Todd to help, led Joan, her own beloved saddle horse, down to the dock and saw that she was safely lodged between decks, and then up came a coach (all this was two days later) and my lady drove off with two hair trunks in front and a French bonnet box behind—St. George beside her, and fat Mammy Henny in

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white kerchief and red bandanna, opposite, and Todd in one of St. George's old shooting-jackets on the box next the driver, with his feet on two of the dogs, the others having been loaned to a friend.

And it was a great leave-taking when the party reached the wharf. Not only were three or four of her girl friends present, but a dozen or more of the old merchants forsook their desks, when the coach unlimbered, most of them crossing the cobbles—some bareheaded, and all of them in high stocks and swallow-tail coats—pens behind their ears, spectacles on their pates—to bid the young princess good-by.

For Kate was still "our Kate," in the widest and broadest sense and the pride and joy of all who knew her, and many who didn't. That she had a dozen beaux—and that some of them had tried to bore holes in each other for love of her; and that one of them was now a wanderer and another in a state of collapse, if report were true—was quite as it should be. Men had died for women a hundred times less worthy and a thousand times less beautiful, and men would die of love again. When at last she made up her mind she would choose the right man, and in the meantime God bless her for just being alive.

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And she was never more alive or more charming than to-day.

“Oh, how delightful of you, Mr. Murdoch, and you too, Mr. Bowdoin—and Max—and all of you, to cross those wretched stones. No, wait, I’ll come to you—” she had called out, when with a stamp of her little feet she had shaken the pleats from her skirt—adding when they had all kissed her hand in turn—“Yes—I am going down to be dairy-maid at Peggy Coston’s,” at which the bald-headed old fellows, with their hands upraised in protest at so great a sacrilege, bowed to the ground, their fingers on their ruffled shirt-fronts, and the younger ones lifted their furry hats and kept them in the air until she had crossed the gang-plank and Todd and Mammy Henny, and Ben who had come to help, lost their several breaths getting the impatient dogs and baggage aboard—and so she sailed away with Uncle George as chaperon, the whole party throwing kisses back and forth.

CHAPTER XX

THEIR reception at Wesley, the ancestral home of the Costons, although it was late at night when they arrived, was none the less joyous. Peggy was the first to welcome the invalid, and Tom was not far behind.

“Give her to me, St. George,” bubbled Peggy, enfolding the girl in her arms. “You blessed thing! Oh, how glad I am to get hold of you! They told me you were ill, child—not a word of truth in it! No, Mr. Coston, you sha’n’t even have one of her little fingers until I get through loving her. What’s your mammy’s name—Henny? Well, Henny, you take Miss Kate’s things into her room—that one at the top of the stairs.”

And then the Honorable Tom Coston said he’d be doggoned if he was going to wait another minute, and he didn’t—for Kate kissed him on both cheeks and gave him her father’s message, congratulating him on his appointment as judge, and thanking him in advance for all the kindness he would show his daughter.

But it was not until she awoke next morning

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and looked out between the posts of her high bedstead through the small, wide-open window overlooking the bay that her heart gave the first bound of real gladness. She loved the sky and the dash of salt air, laden now with the perfume of budding fruit trees, that blew straight in from the sea. She loved, too, the stir and sough of the creaking pines and the cheery calls from the barnyard. Here she could get her mind settled; here, too, she could forget all the little things that had bothered her—there would be no more invitations to accept or decline; no promises she must keep. She and her Uncle George could have one long holiday—she needed it and, goodness knows, he needed it after all his troubles—and they would begin as soon as breakfast was over. And they did—the dogs plunging ahead, the two hand in hand, St. George, guide and philosopher, pointing out this and that characteristic feature of the once famous estate and dilating on its past glory.

“Even in my father’s day,” he continued, his face lighting up, “it was one of the great show places of the county. The stables held twenty horses and a coach, besides no end of gigs and carryalls. This broad road on which we walk was lined with flower-beds and shaded by live-oaks. Over there, near that little grove,

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were three great barns and lesser out-buildings,¹ besides the negro quarters, smoke-houses, and hay-ricks. Really a wonderful place in its day, Kate."

Then he went on to tell of how the verandas were shaded with honeysuckles, and the halls, drawing-rooms, and dining-room crowded with furniture; how there were yellow damask curtains, and screens, and hair-cloth sofas and a harmonicon of musical glasses which was played by wetting one's fingers in a bowl of water and passing them over the rims—he had played on it himself when a boy; and slaves galore—nearly one hundred of them, not to mention a thousand acres of tillable land to plough and harrow, as well as sheep, oxen, pigs, chickens, ducks—everything that a man of wealth and position might have had in the old days, and about every one of which St. George had a memory.

Then when Tom's father, who was the sole heir, took charge (here his voice dropped to a whisper) dissolution proceedings set in—and Tom finished them! and St. George sighed heavily as he pointed out the changes:—the quarters in ruins, the stables falling to pieces, the gates tied up with strings or swinging loose; and the flocks, herds, and live-stock things of the past. Nor had a negro been left—none Tom

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really owned: one by one they had been sold or hired out, or gone off nobody knew where, he being too lazy, or too indifferent, or too good-natured, to hunt them up. The house, as Kate had seen, was equally neglected. Even what remained of the old furniture was on its last legs—the curtains patched, or in shreds—the carpets worn into holes.

Kate listened eagerly, but she did not sigh. It was all charming to her in the soft spring sunshine, the air a perfume, the birds singing, the blossoms bursting, the peach-trees anthems of praise—and best of all her dear Uncle George strolling at her side. And then everything was so clean and fresh and sweet in every nook and corner of the tumble-down house. Peggy, as she soon discovered, looked after that—in fact Peggy looked after everything that required looking after—and everything did—including the judge. Mr. Coston was tired, Peggy would say, or Mr. Coston had not been very well, so she just did it herself instead of bothering him. Since his promotion it was generally “the judge” who was too tired, being absorbed in his court duties, etc., etc. But it always came with a laugh, and it was always genuine, for to wait upon him and look after him and minister to him was her highest happiness.

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Good for nothing as he would have been to some women—unpractical, lazy—a man few sensible wives would have put up with—Peggy adored him; and so did his children adore him, and so, for that matter, did his neighbors, many of whom, although they ridiculed him behind his back, could never escape the charm of his personality whenever they sat beside his rocking-chair.

This chair—the only comfortable chair in the house, by the way—had, in his less distinguished days, been his throne. In it he would sit all day long, cutting and whittling, filing and polishing curious trinkets of tortoise-shell for watch-guards and tiny baskets made of cherry-stones, cunningly wrought and finished. He was an expert, too, in corn-cob pipes, which he carved for all his friends; and pin-wheels for everybody's children. When it came, however, to such matters as a missing hinge to the front door, a brick under a tottering chimney, the straightening of a falling fence, the repairing of a loose lock on the smoke-house—or even the care of the family carryall, which despite its great age and infirmities was often left out in the rain to rust and ruin—these things must, of course, wait until the over-worked father of the house found time to look after them.

The children loved him the most. They asked

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for nothing better than to fix him in his big chair by the fender, throw upon the fire a basket of bark chips from the wood-yard, and enough pitch-pine knots to wake them up, and after filling his pipe and lighting it, snuggle close—every bend and curve of the wide-armed splint-bottomed comfort packed full, all waiting to hear him tell one of his stories. Sometimes it was the tale of the fish and the cuff-button—how he once dropped his sleeve-link overboard, and how a year afterward he was in a shallop on the Broadwater fishing for rockfish when he caught a splendid fellow, which when Aunt Patience cleaned—(here his voice would drop to a whisper)—“What do you think!—why, out popped the sleeve-link that was in his cuff this minute!” And for the hundredth time the bit of gold would be examined by each child in turn. Or it was the witch story—about the Yahoo wild man with great horns and a lashing tail, who lived in the swamp and went howling and prowling about for plunder and prey. (This was always given with a low, prolonged growl, like a dog in pain—all the children shuddering.) And then followed the oft-told tale of how this same terrible Yahoo once came up with Hagar, who was riding a witch pony to get to the witches’ dance in the cane-brake, and how he made off with her to the

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swamp, where she had had to cook for him — ever — ever — ever since. (Long-drawn breath, showing that all was over for that day at least.)

Todd got the true inwardness of the situation before he had been many days at Wesley: for the scene with the children was often repeated when court was not in session.

“Fo’ Gawd, Marse George, hab you had time to watch dat gemman, de jedge? Dey do say he’s sumpin’ great, but I tell ye he’s dat lazy a fly stuck in ’lasses ’d pass him on de road.”

St. George laughed heartily in reply, but he did not reprimand him.

“What makes you think so, Todd?”

“Can’t help thinkin’ so. I wuz standin’ by de po’ch yisterday holdin’ Miss Kate’s mare, when I yere de mistis ask de jedge ter go out an’ git ’er some kindlin’ f’om de wood-pile. He sot a-rockin’ hisse’f in dat big cheer ob his’n an’ I yered him say — ‘Yes, in a minute,’ but he didn’t move. Den she holler ag’in at him an’ still he rock hisse’f, sayin’ he’s comin’. Den, fust thing I knowed out she come to de wood-pile an’ git it herse’f, an’ den when she pass him wid ’er arms full o’ wood he look up an’ say — ‘Peggy, come yere an’ kiss me — I dunno what we’d do widout ye — you’s de Lawd’s anointed, sho’.’”

Kate got no end of amusement out of him,

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and would often walk with him to court that she might listen to his drolleries—especially his queer views of life—the simplest and most unaffected to which she had ever bent her ears. Now and then, as time went on, despite her good-natured toleration of his want of independence—he being always dominated by his wife—she chanced, to her great surprise, upon some nuggets of hard common-sense of so high an assay that they might really be graded as wisdom—his analysis of men and women being particularly surprising. Those little twinkling, and sometimes sleepy, eyes of his, now that she began to study him the closer, reminded her of the unreadable eyes of an elephant she had once seen—eyes that presaged nothing but inertia, until whack went the trunk and over toppled the boy who had teased him.

And with this new discovery there developed at last a certain respect for the lazy, good-natured, droll old man. Opinions which she had heretofore laughed at suddenly became of value; criticisms which she had passed over in silence seemed worthy of further consideration.

Peggy, however, fitted into all the tender places of her heart. She had never known her own mother; all she remembered was a face bending close and a soft hand that tucked in the

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coverlet one night when she couldn't sleep. The memory had haunted her from the days of her childhood—clear and distinct, with every detail in place. Had there been light enough in her mother's bedroom, she was sure she could have added the dear face itself to her recollection. Plump, full-bosomed, rosy-cheeked Peggy (fifteen years younger than Tom) supplied the touch and voice, and all the tenderness as well, that these sad memories recalled, and all that the motherless girl had yearned for.

And the simple, uneventful life—one without restraints of any kind, greatly satisfied her: so different from her own at home with Prim as Chief Regulator. Everybody, to her delight, did as they pleased, each one following the bent of his or her inclination. St. George was out at daybreak in the duck-blinds, or, breakfast over, roaming the fields with his dogs, Todd a close attendant. The judge would stroll over to court an hour or more late, only to find an equally careless and contented group blocking up the door—"po' white trash" most of them, each one with a grievance. Whenever St. George accompanied him, and he often did, his Honor would spend even less time on the bench—cutting short both ends of the session, Temple laughing himself sore over the judge's decisions.

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"And he stole yo' shoat and never paid for him?" he heard his Honor say one day in a hog case, where two farmers who had been waiting hours for Tom's coming were plaintiff and defendant. "How did you know it was yo' shoat—did you mark him?"

"No, suh."

"Tie a tag around his neck?"

"No, suh."

"Well, you just keep yo' hogs inside yo' lot. Too many loose hogs runnin' 'round. Case is dismissed and co't is adjourned for the day," which, while very poor law, was good common-sense, stray hogs on the public highway having become a nuisance.

With these kindly examples before her, Kate soon fell into the ways of the house. If she did not wish to get up she lay abed and Peggy brought her breakfast with her own hands. If, when she did leave her bed, she went about in pussy-slippers and a loose gown of lace and frills without her stays, Peggy's only protest was against her wearing anything else—so adorable was she. When this happy, dreamy indolence began to pall upon her—and she could not stand it for long—she would be up at sunrise helping Peggy wash and dress her frolicsome children or get them off to school, and this done, would

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assist in the housework—even rolling the pastry with her own delicate palms, or sitting beside the bubbling, spontaneous woman, needle in hand, aiding with the family mending—while Peggy, glad of the companionship, would sit with ears open, her mind alert, probing—probing—trying to read the heart of the girl whom she loved the better every day. And so there had crept into Kate's heart a new peace that was as fresh sap to a dying plant, bringing the blossoms to her cheeks and the spring of wind-blown branches to her step.

Then one fine morning, to the astonishment of every one, and greatly to Todd's disgust, no less a person than Mr. Langdon Willits of "Oak Hill" (distant three miles away) dismounted at Coston's front porch, and throwing the reins to the waiting darky, stretched his convalescent, but still shaky, legs in the direction of the living-room, there to await the arrival of "Miss Seymour of Kennedy Square," who, so he informed Todd, "expected him."

Todd scraped a foot respectfully in answer, touched his cocoanut of a head with his monkey claw of a finger, waited until the broad back of the red-headed gentleman had been swallowed up by the open door, and then indulged in this soliloquy:

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“Funny de way dem bullets hab o’ missin’ folks. Des a leetle funder down an’ dere wouldn’t ’a’ been none o’ dis yere foolishness. Pity Marse Harry hadn’t practised some mo’. Ef he had ter do it ag’in I reckon he’d pink him so he neber be cavortin’ ’roun’ like he is now.”

Willits’s sudden appearance filled St. George with ill-concealed anxiety. He did not believe in this parade of invalidism, nor did he like Kate’s encouraging smile when she met him—and there was no question that she did smile—and, more portentous still, that she enjoyed it. Other things, too, she grew to enjoy, especially the long rides in the woods and over to the broad water. For Willits’s health after a few days of the sunshine of Kate’s companionship had undergone so renovating a process that the sorrel horse now arrived at the porch almost every day, whereupon Kate’s Joan would be led out, and the smiled-upon gentleman in English riding-boots and brown velvet jacket and our gracious lady in Lincoln green habit with wide hat and sweeping plume would mount their steeds and be lost among the pines.

Indeed, to be exact, half of Kate’s time was now spent in the saddle, Willits riding beside her. And with each day’s outing a new and, to St. George, a more disturbing intimacy ap-

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peared to be growing between them. Now it was Willits's sister who had to be considered and especially invited to Wesley—a thin wisp of a woman with tortoise-shell sidecombs and bunches of dry curls, who always dressed in shiny black silk and whose only ornament was her mother's hair set in a breastpin; or it was his father by whom she must sit when he came over in his gig—a bluff, hearty man who generally wore a red waistcoat with big bone buttons and high boots with tassels in front.

This last confidential relation, when the manners and bearing of the elder man came under his notice, seemed to St. George the most unaccountable of all. Departures from the established code always jarred upon him, and the gentleman in the red waistcoat and tasselled boots often wandered so far afield that he invariably set St. George's teeth on edge. Although he had never met Kate before, he called her by her first name after the first ten minutes of their acquaintance—his son, he explained, having done nothing but sound her praises for the past two years, an excuse which carried no weight in gentleman George's mind because of its additional familiarity. He had never dared, he knew, to extend that familiarity to Peggy—it had always been "Mrs. Coston" to her and

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it had always been "Mr. Coston" to Tom, and it was now "your Honor" or "judge" to the dispenser of justice. For though the owner of Oak Hill lived within a few miles of the tumble-down remnant that sheltered the Costons; and though he had fifty servants to their one, or half a one—and broad acres in proportion, to say nothing of flocks and herds—St. George had always been aware that he seldom crossed their porch steps or they his. That little affair of some fifty or more years ago was still remembered, and the children of people who did that sort of thing must, of course, pay the penalty. Even Peggy never failed to draw the line. "Very nice people, my dear," he had heard her say to Kate one day when the subject of the younger man's family had come up. "Mr. Willits senior is a fine, open-hearted man, and does a great deal of good in the county with his money—quite a politician, and they do say has a fair chance of some time being governor of the State. But very few of us about here would want to marry into the family, all the same. Oh no, my dear Kate, of course there was nothing against his grandmother. She was a very nice woman, I believe, and I've often heard my own mother speak of her. Her father came from Albemarle Sound, if I am right, and was

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old John Willits's overseer. The girl was his daughter.

Kate had made no answer. Who Langdon Willits's grandmother was, or whether he had any grandmother at all, did not concern her in the least. She rather admired the young Albe-marle Sound girl for walking boldly into the Willits family—low-born as she was—and making them respect her.

But none of Peggy's outspoken warnings nor any of St. George's silent acceptances of the several situations—always a mark of his disapproval—checked the game of love-making which was going on—the give-and-take stage of it, with the odds varying with each new shifting of the cards, both Peggy and St. George growing the more nervous.

"She's going to accept him, St. George," Peggy had said to him one morning as he stood behind her chair while she was shelling the peas for dinner. "I didn't think so when he first came, but I believe it now. I have said all I could to her. She has cuddled up in my arms and cried herself sick over it, but she won't hold out much longer. Young Rutter left her heart all torn and bleeding and this man has bound up the sore places. She will never love anybody that way again—and may be it is just as well.

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He'd have kept her guessing all her life as to what he'd do next. I wish Willits's blood was better, for she's a dear, sweet child and proud as she can be, only she's proud over different things from what I would be. But you can make up your mind to it—she'll keep him dangling for a while yet, as she did last summer at the Red Sulphur, but she'll be his wife in a year or less—you mark my words. You haven't yet heard from the first one, have you?—as to when he's coming home?"

St. George hadn't heard—he sighed in return—a habit of his lately: No, not for two months or more—not since the letter in which Harry said he had left the ship and had gone up into the interior. He had, he told her, mentioned the boy's silence to Kate in a casual way, watching the effect the news produced upon her—but after the remark that the mails were always irregular from those far-away countries, she had turned the conversation into other channels, she having caught sight of Willits, who had just dismounted from his horse.

As to St. George's own position in the affair he felt that his hands were still so firmly tied that he could do nothing one way or the other. His personal intercourse with Willits had been such as he would always have with a man with

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whom he was on speaking terms, but it never passed that border. He was courteous, careful of his speech, and mindful of the young man's devotion to Kate, whose guardian for the time being he was, but he neither encouraged nor thwarted his suit. Kate was of age and was fully competent to decide for herself—extremely competent, for that matter.

How little this clear reader of women's hearts—and scores had been spread out before him—knew of Kate's, no one but the girl herself could have told. That she was adrift on an open sea without a rudder, and that she had already begun to lose confidence both in her seamanship and in her compass, was becoming more and more apparent to her every day she lived. All she knew positively was that she had been sailing before the wind for some weeks past with everything flying loose, and that the time had now come for her either to "go about" or keep on her course.

Her suitor's family she had carefully considered. She had also studied his environment and the impression he made upon those who had known him longest:—she must now focus her mental lenses on the man himself. He had, she knew, graduated with honors, being the valedictorian of his class· had risen rapidly in his pro-

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fession, and, from what her father said, would soon reach a high place among his brother lawyers. There was even talk of sending him to the legislature, where her own father, the Honorable Prim, had achieved his title. She wished, of course, that Mr. Willits's hair was not quite so red; she wished, too, that the knuckles on his hands were not so large and bony—and that he was not always at her beck and call; but these, she was forced to admit, were trifles in the make-up of a fine man. There was, however, a sane mind under the carrot-colored hair and a warm palm inside the knotted knuckles, and that was infinitely more important than little physical peculiarities which one would forget as life went on. As to his periods of ill health, these she herself could have prevented had she told him the whole truth that night on the stairs, or the day before when she had parried his direct proposal of marriage—a piece of stupidity for which she never failed to blame herself.

His future conduct did not trouble her in the least. She had long since become convinced that Willits would never again become intemperate. He had kept his promise, and this meant more to her than his having given way to past temptations. The lesson he had learned at the ball had had, too, its full effect—one he had never for-

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gotten. Over and over again he had apologized to her for his brutal insolence in laying his profane hands on her dancing-card and tearing it to bits before her eyes. He had, moreover, deeply regretted the duel and had sworn to her on his honor as a gentleman that he would never fight another.

Each time she had listened quietly and had told him how much she was pleased and how grateful she was for his confidence and how such fine resolutions redounded to his credit, and yet in thinking it over the next day she could not help comparing his meek outbursts of sorrow with Harry's blunt statement made to her the last time she saw him in the park, when, instead of expressing any regret for having shot Willits, he had boldly declared that he would do it again if any such insult were repeated. And strange to say—and this she could not understand in herself—in all such comparisons Harry came out best.

But:—and here she had to hold on to her rudder with all her might—she had already made one mistake, tumbling head over heels in love with a young fellow who had mortified her before the world when their engagement was less than a few months old, making her name and affections a byword, and she could not and would not repeat the blunder. This had shattered her

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customary self-reliance, leaving her wellnigh helpless. Perhaps after all—an unheard-of thing in her experience—she had better seek advice of some older and wiser pilot. Two heads, or even three—(here her canny Scotch blood asserted itself)—were better than one in deciding so important a matter as the choosing of a mate for life. And yet—now she came to think it over—it was not so much a question of heads as it was a question of shoulders on which the heads rested. To turn to St. George, or to any member of the Willits kin, was impossible. Peggy's views she understood. Counsel, however, she must have, and at once.

Suddenly an inspiration thrilled her like an electric shock—one that sent the blood tingling to the very roots of her hair. Why had she not thought of it before! And it must be in the most casual way—quite as a matter of general conversation, he doing all the talking and she doing all the listening, for on no account must he suspect her purpose.

Within the hour she had tied the ribbons of her wide leghorn hat under her dimpled chin, picked up her shawl, and started off alone, following the lane to the main road. If the judge, by any chance, had adjourned court he would come straight home and she would meet him on

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the way. If he was still engaged in the dispensation of justice, she would wait for him outside.

She had judged wisely. Indeed she might have waited for days for some such moment and not found so favorable an opportunity. His Honor had already left the bench and was then slowly making his way toward where she stood, hugging the sidewalk trees the better to shade him from the increasing heat. As the day had promised to be an unusually warm one, he had attired himself in a full suit of yellow nankeen, with palm-leaf fan and wide straw hat—a combination which so matched the color and texture of his placid, kindly face that Kate could hardly keep from laughing outright. Instead she quickened her steps until she stood beside him, her lovely, fresh color heightened by her walk, her eyes sparkling, her face wreathed in smiles.

“You are lookin’ mighty cute, my Lady Kate, in yo’ Paisley shawl and sarsanet pelisse,” he called out in his hearty, cheery way. “Has Peggy seen ’em? I’ve been tryin’ to get her some just like ’em, only my co’t duties are so pressin’. Goodness, gracious me!—but it’s gettin’ hot!” Here he stopped and mopped his face, then his eyes fell upon her again: “Bless my soul, child!—you do look pretty this mornin’—jest like yo’ mother! Where did you get

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all those pink and white apple-blossoms in yo' cheeks?"

"Do you remember her, Mr. Coston?" she rejoined, ignoring his compliment.

"Do I remember her! The belle of fo' counties, my dear—eve'ybody at her feet; five or six gentlemen co'tin' her at once; old Captain Barkeley, cross as a bear—wouldn't let her marry this one or that one—kep' her guessin' night and day, till one of 'em blew his brains out, and then she fainted dead awày. Pretty soon yo' father co'ted her, and bein' Scotch, like the old captain and sober as an owl and about as cunnin', it wasn't long befo' everything was settled. Very nice man, yo' father—got to have things mighty partic'lar; we young bucks used to say he slept in a bag of lavender and powdered his cheeks every mornin' to make him look fresh, while most of us were soakin' wet in the duck-blinds—but that was only our joke. That's long befo' you were born, child. But yo' mother didn't live long—they said her heart was broken 'bout the other fellow, but there wasn't a word of truth in that foolishness—couldn't be. I used to see her and yo' father together long after that, and she was mighty good to him, and he was to her. Yes—all comes back to me. Stand still, child, and let

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me look at you—yes—you're plumper than yo' mother and a good deal rosier, and you don't look so slender and white as she did, like one of those pale Indian pipes she used to hunt in the woods. It's the Seymour in you that's done that, I reckon."

Kate walked on in silence. It was not the first time that some of her mother's old friends had told her practically the same story—not so clearly, perhaps, because few had the simple, outspoken candor of the old fellow, but enough to let her know that her father was not her mother's first love.

"Don't be in a hurry, child, and don't let anybody choose for you," he ran on. "Peggy and I didn't make any mistakes—and don't you. Now this young son of Parker Willits's"—here his wrinkled face tightened up into a pucker as if he had just bitten into an unripe persimmon—"good enough young man, may be; goin' to be something great, I reckon—in Mr. Taney's office, I hear, or will be next winter. I 'spect he'll keep out of jail—most Willitses do—but keep an eye on him and watch him, and watch yo'self too. That's more important still. The cemetery is a long ways off when you marry the wrong man, child. And that other fellow that Peggy tells me has been co'tin' you—Talbot

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Rutter's boy—he's a wild one, isn't he?—drunk half the time and fightin' everybody who don't agree with him. Come pretty nigh endin' young Willits, so they say. Now I hear he's run away to sea and left all his debts behind. Talbot turned him neck and heels out of doors when he found it out, so they tell me—and served the scapegrace right. Don't be in a hurry, child. Right man will come bime-by. Just the same with Peggy till I come along—there she is now, bless her sweet heart! Peggy, you darlin'—I got so lonely for you I just had to 'journ co't. I've been telling Lady Kate that she mustn't be in a hurry to get married till she finds somebody that will make her as happy as you and me." Here the judge slipped his arm around Peggy's capacious waist and the two crossed the pasture as the nearest way to the house.

Kate kept on her way alone.

Her only reply to the garrulous judge had been one of her rippling laughs, but it was the laughter of bubbles with the sediment lying deep in the bottom of the glass.

CHAPTER XXI

BUT all outings must come to an end. And so when the marsh grass on the lowlands lay in serried waves of dappled satin, and the corn on the uplands was waist high and the roses a mob of beauty, Kate threw her arms around Peggy and kissed her over and over again, her whole heart flowing through her lips; and then the judge got his good-by on his wrinkled cheek, and the children on any clean spot which she found on their molasses-covered faces; and then the cavalcade took up its line of march for the boat-landing, Willits going as far as the wharf, where he and Kate had a long talk in low tones, in which he seemed to be doing all the talking and she all the listening—"But nuthin' mo'n jes' a han'shake" (so Todd told St. George), "he lookin' like he want'er eat her up an' she kinder sayin' dat de cake ain't brown 'nough yit fur tastin'—but one thing I know fo' sho'—an' dat is she didn't let 'im kiss 'er; I wuz leadin' his horse pas' whar dey wuz standin', an' de sorrel varmint got cuttin' up an' I kep' him prancin' till Mister Willits

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couldn't stay wid her no longer. Drat dat red-haided——”

“Stop, Todd—be careful—you mustn't speak that way of Mr. Willits.”

“Well, Marse George, I won't—but I ain't neber like him f'om de fust. He ain't quality an' he neber kin be. How Miss Kate don' stan' him is mo'n I kin tell.”

Kate drove up to her father's house in state, with Ben as special envoy to see that she and her belongings were properly cared for. St. George with Todd and the four dogs—six in all—arrived, despite Kate's protestations, on foot.

Pawson met him at the door. He had given up his boarding-house and had transferred his traps and parcels to the floor above—into Harry's old room, really—in order that the additional rent—he had now taken entire charge of Temple's finances—might help in the payment of the interest on the mortgage. He had thought this all out while St. George was at Wesley and had moved in without notifying him, that being the best way to solve the problem—St. George still retaining his bedroom and dining-room and the use of the front door. Jemima, too, had gone. She wanted, so she had told her master the day he left with Kate, to take a holiday and

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visit some of her people who lived down by the Marsh Market in an old rookery near the Falls, and would come back when he sent for her; but Todd had settled all that the morning of his arrival, the moment he caught sight of her black face.

“Ain’t no use yo’ comin’ back,” the darky blurted out. “I’m gwineter do de cookin’ and de chamber-wo’k. Dere ain’t ’nough to eat fo’ mo’n two. When dem white-livered, no-count, onery gemmens dat stole Marse George’s money git in de chain-gang, war dey b’longs, den may be we’ll hab sumpin’ to go to market on, but dat ain’t yit; an’ don’t ye tell Marse George I tol’ yer or I’ll ha’nt ye like dat witch I done heared ’bout down to Wesley—ha’nt ye so ye’ll think de debble’s got ye.” To his master, his only explanation was that Jemima had gone to look after her sister, who had been taken “wid a mis’ry in her back.”

If St. George knew anything of the common talk going on around him no one was ever the wiser. He continued the even tenor of his life, visiting and receiving his friends, entertaining his friends in a simple and inexpensive way: Once Poe had spent an evening with him, when he made a manly, straightforward apology for his conduct the night of the dinner, and on another occasion Mr. Kennedy had made an especial

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point of missing a train to Washington to have an hour's chat with him. In the afternoons he would have a rubber of whist with the arch-deacon who lived across the Square—a broad-minded ecclesiastic, who believed in relaxation, although, of course, he was never seen at the club; or he might drop into the Chesapeake for a talk with Richard or sit beside him in his curious laboratory at the rear of his house where he worked out many of the problems that absorbed his mind and inspired his hopes. At night, however late or early—whenever he reached home—there was always a romp with his dogs. This last he rarely omitted. The click of the front-door latch, followed by his firm step overhead, was their signal, and up they would come, tumbling over each other in their eagerness to reach his cheeks—straight up, their paws scraping his clothes; then a swoop into the dining-room, when they would be “downed” to the floor, their eyes following his every movement.

Nor had his own financial situation begun as yet to trouble him. Todd and Pawson, however, had long since become nervous. More than once had they put their heads together for some plan by which sufficient money could be raised for current expenses. In this praiseworthy

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effort, to Todd's unbounded astonishment, Pawson had one night developed a plan in which the greatly feared and much-despised Gadgem was to hold first place. Indeed on the very morning succeeding the receipt of Pawson's letter and at an hour when St. George would be absent at the club, there had come a brisk rat-a-tat on the front door and Gadgem had sidled in.

Todd had not seen the collector since that eventful morning when he stood by ready to pick up the pieces of that gentleman's dismembered body when his master was about to throw him into the street for doubting his word, and he now studied him with the greatest interest. The first thing that struck him was the collector's clothes. As the summer was approaching he had changed his winter suit for a combination of brown linen bound with black—(second hand, of course, its former owner having gone out of mourning) and at the moment sported a moth-eaten, crape-encircled white beaver with a floppy, two-inch brim, a rusty black stock that grabbed him close under the chin, completely submerging his collar, and a pair of congress gaiters very much run down at the heel. He was evidently master of himself and the situation, for he stood looking from Todd to the young lawyer, a furtive,

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anxious expression on his face that betokened both a surprise at being sent for and a curiosity to learn the cause, although no word of inquiry passed his lips.

Pawson's opening remark calmed the collector's suspicions:

"*Exactly*," he answered in a relieved tone, when the plot had been fully developed, dragging a mate of the red bandanna—a blue one—from his pocket and blowing his nose in an impressive manner. "*Exactly*—quite right—quite right—difficult perhaps—*enormously* difficult but—yes—quite right."

Then there had followed a hurried consultation, during which the bullet-headed darky absorbed every word, his eyes rolling about in his head, his breath ending somewhere near his jugular vein.

These details duly agreed upon, Gadgem bowed himself out of the dining-room, carrying with him a note-book filled with such data as:

- 2 fowling pieces made by Purdey, 1838.
- 3 heavy duck guns.
- 2 English saddles.
- 1 silver loving cup.
- 2 silver coasters, etc., etc.,

a list which Todd the night before had prompted and which Pawson, in his clear, round hand,

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had transferred to a sheet of foolscap ready for Gadgem in the morning.

On reaching the front door the collector stopped and looked furtively up the stairs. He was wondering with professional caution whether St. George had returned and was within hearing distance. If so much as a hint should reach Temple's ears the whole scheme would come to naught. Still in doubt, he called out in his sharpest business voice, as if prolonging a conversation which had been carried on inside:

"Yes, Mr. Pawson, please say to Mr. Temple that it is *Gadgem*, of *Gadgem & Coombs*—and say that I will be here at ten o'clock to-morrow—sharp—on the minute; I am *always* on the minute in matters of this kind. Only five minutes of his time—five minutes, remember—" and he passed out of hearing.

Todd, now duly installed as co-conspirator, opened the ball the next morning at breakfast. St. George had slept late, and the hands of the marble clock marked but a few minutes of the hour of Gadgem's expected arrival, and not a moment could be lost.

"Dat Gadgem man done come yere yister-day," he began, drawing out his master's chair with an extra flourish to hide his nervousness,

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“an’ he say he’s comin’ ag’in dis mornin’ at ten o’clock. Clar to goodness it’s dat now. I done forgot to tell ye.”

“What does he want, Todd?” asked St. George, dropping into his seat.

“I dunno, sah—said he was lookin’ fo’ sumpin’ fo’ a frien’ ob his—I think it was a gun—an’ he wanted to know what kind to buy fur him— Yes, sah, dem waffles ’s jes’ off de fire. He ’lowed he didn’t know nuffin’ ’bout guns—butter, sah?—an’ den Mister Pawson spoke up an’ said he’d better ask you. He’s tame dis time—leastways he ’peared so.”

“A fine gun is rather a difficult thing to get in these days, Todd,” replied St. George, opening his napkin. “Since old Joe Manton died I don’t know but one good maker—and that’s Purdey, of London, and he, I hear, has orders to last him five years. No, Todd—I’d rather have the toast.”

“Yes, sah—I knowed ye couldn’t do nuffin’ fur him— Take de top piece—dat’s de brownest—but he seemed so cut up ’bout it dat I tol’ him he might see ye fur a minute if he come ’long ’bout ten o’clock, when you was fru’ yo’ bre’kfus’, ’fo’ ye got tangled up wid yo’ letters an’ de papers. Dat’s him now, I spec’s. Shall I show him in?”

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“Yes, show him in, Todd. Gadgem isn’t a bad sort of fellow after all. He only wants his pound of flesh like the others. Ah, good-morning, Mr. Gadgem.” The front door had been purposely left open, and though the bill collector had knocked by way of warning, he had paused for no answer and was already in the room. The little man laid his battered hat silently on a chair near the door, pulled down his tight linen sleeves with the funereal binding, adjusted his high black stock, and with half-creeping, half-cringing movement, advanced to where St. George sat.

“I said good-morning, Mr. Gadgem,” repeated St. George in his most captivating tone of voice. He had been greatly amused at Gadgem’s antics.

“I heard you, sir—I heard you *distinctly*, sir—I was only seeking a place on which to rest my hat, sir—not a very *inspiring* hat—quite the contrary—but all I have. Yes, sir—you are quite right—it is a *very* good morning—a most *delightful* morning. I was convinced of that when I crossed the park, sir. The trees——”

“Never mind the trees, Gadgem. We will take those up later on. Tell me what I can do for you—what do you want?”

“A *gun*, sir—a plain, straightforward *gun*—

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one that can be relied upon. Not for *myself*, sir—I am not murderously inclined—but for a friend who has commissioned me—the exact word, sir—although the percentage is small—*commissioned* me to acquire for him a fowling piece of the pattern, weight, and build of those belonging to St. George W. Temple, Esquire, of Kennedy Square—and so I made bold, sir, to——”

“You won’t find it, Gadgem,” replied St. George, buttering the toast. “I have two that I have shot with for years that haven’t their match in the State. Todd, bring me one of those small bird guns—there, behind the door in the rack. Hand it to Mr. Gadgem. Now, can you see by the shape of—take hold of it, man. But do you know anything about guns?”

“Only enough to keep away from their muzzles, sir.” He had it in his hand now—holding it by the end of the barrel, Todd instinctively dodging out of the way, although he knew it was not loaded. “No, sir, I don’t know anything—not the very *smallest* thing—about guns. There is nothing, in fact, I know so little about as a gun—that is why I have come to you.”

St. George recovered the piece and laid it as

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gently on the table beside his plate as if it had been a newly laid egg.

"No, I don't think you do," he laughed, "or you wouldn't hold it upside down. Now go on and give me the rest."

Gadgem emitted a chuckle—the nearest he ever came to a laugh: "To have it go *on*, sir, is infinitely preferable than to have it go *off*, sir. He-he! And you have, I believe you said, two of these highly valuable implements of death?"

"Yes, five altogether—two of this kind. Here, Todd"—and he picked up the gun—"put it back behind the door."

Gadgem felt in his inside pocket, produced and consulted a memorandum with the air of a man who wanted to be entirely sure, and in a bland voice said:

"I should think at your time of life—if you will permit me, sir—that one less gun would not seriously inconvenience you. Would you permit me, sir, to hope that——"

St. George looked up from his plate and a peculiar expression flitted across his face.

"You mean you want to buy it?"

The bill collector made a little movement forward and scrutinized St. George's face with the eye of a hawk. For a man of Temple's kidney to be without a fowling piece was like a king be-

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ing without a crown. This was the crucial moment. Gadgem knew Temple's class, and knew just how delicately he must be handled. If St. George's pride, or his love for his favorite chattels—things personal to himself—should overcome him, the whole scheme would fall to the ground. That any gentleman of his standing had ever seen the inside of a pawn-shop in his life was unthinkable. This was what Gadgem faced. As for Todd, he had not drawn a full breath since Gadgem opened his case.

"Not *exactly* buy it, sir," purred Gadgem, twisting his body into an obsequious spiral. "Men of your position do not traffic in such things—but if you would be persuaded, sir, for a money consideration which you would fix yourself—say the *original* cost of the gun—to spare one of your five—you would greatly delight—in fact, you would *overwhelm* with gratitude—a friend of mine."

St. George hesitated, looked out of the window, and a brand-new thought forced its way into his mind—as if a closet had been suddenly opened, revealing a skeleton he had either forgotten or had put permanently out of sight. There *was* need of this "original cost"—instant need—something he had entirely forgotten. Jemima would soon need it—perhaps needed it

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at that very minute. He had, it was true, often kept her waiting: but that was when he could pay at his pleasure; now, perhaps, he couldn't pay at all.

"All right, Gadgem," he said slowly, a far-away, thoughtful look on his face — "come to think of it I don't need two guns of this calibre, and I am quite willing to let this one go, if it will oblige your friend." Here Todd breathed a sigh of relief so loud and deep that his master turned his head in inquiry. "As to the price — I'll look that up. Come and see me again in a day or two. Better take the gun with you now."

The fight had been won, but the risk had been great. Even Pawson could hardly believe his ears when Gadgem, five minutes later, related the outcome of the interview.

"Well, then, it will be plain sailing so long as the rest of the things last," said Pawson, handling the piece with a covetous touch. He too liked a day off when he could get it. "Who will you sell the gun to, Gadgem?"

"God knows — I don't! I'll borrow the money on it somehow — but I can't see him suffer — no, sir — can't see him *suffer*. It's a pleasure to serve him — real gentleman — *real* — do you hear, Pawson? No veneer — no sham — no lies! Damn few such men, I tell you. Never met one before

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—never will meet one again. Gave up everything he had for a rattle-brain young scamp—*beggared* himself to pay his debts—not a drop of the fellow's blood in his veins either—incredible—incredible! Got to handle him like gunpowder or he'll blow everything into matchsticks. Find out the price and I'll bring the money tomorrow. Do you pay it to him; I can't. I'd feel too damn mean after lying to him the way I have. Feel that way now. Good-day."

The same scene was practically repeated the following month. It was an English saddle this time, St. George having two. And it was the same unknown gentleman who figured as "the much-obliged friend," Pawson conducting the negotiations and securing the owner's consent. On this occasion Gadgem sold the saddle outright to the keeper of a livery stable, whose bills he collected, paying the difference between the asking and the selling price out of his own pocket.

Gradually, however, St. George awoke to certain unsuspected features of what was going on around him. The discovery was made one morning when the go-between was closeted in Pawson's lower office, Pawson conducting the negotiations in St. George's dining-room. The young attorney, with Gadgem's assistance, had staved off some accounts until a legal ultimatum had

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been reached, and, having but few resources of his own left, had, with Todd's help, decided that the silver loving-cup presented to his client's father by the Marquis de Castellux could alone save the situation—a decision which brought an emphatic refusal from the owner. This and the discovery of Pawson's and Gadgem's treachery had greatly incensed him.

“And you tell me, Pawson, that that scoundrel, Gadgem, has—Todd go down and bring him up here immediately—has had the audacity to run a pawnshop for my benefit without so much as asking my leave?—peddling my things?—lying to me straight through?” Here the door opened and Gadgem's face peered in. He had, as was his custom, crept upstairs so as to be within instant call when wanted.

“Yes—I am speaking of you, sir. Come inside and shut that door behind you. You too, Todd. What the devil do you mean, Gadgem, by deceiving me in this way? Don't you know I would rather have starved to death than——”

Gadgem raised his hand in protest:

“*Exactly* so, sir. That's what we were afraid of, sir—such an uncomfortable thing to starve to death, sir—I couldn't permit it, sir—I'd rather walk my feet off than permit it. I did walk them off——”

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“But who asked you to tramp the streets with my things under your arm? And you lied to me about it—you said you wanted to oblige a friend. There wasn’t a word of truth in it, and you know it.”

Again Gadgem’s hand went out with a pleading “Please-don’t” gesture. “Less than a word, sir—a whole dictionary less, sir, and *unabridged* at that, if I might be permitted to say it. My friend still has the implement of death, and not only does he still possess it, but he is *enormously* obliged. Indeed, I have never *seen* him so happy.”

“You mean to tell me, Gadgem,” St. George burst out, “that the money you paid me for the gun really came from a friend of yours?”

“I do, sir.” Gadgem’s gimlet eye was worming itself into Temple’s.

“What’s his name?”

“Gadgem, sir—John Gadgem, of Gadgem & Coombs—Gadgem sole survivor, since Coombs is with the angels; the foreclosure having taken place last month: hence these weeds.” And he lifted the tails of his black coat in evidence.

“Out of your own money?”

“Yes, sir—some I had laid away.”

St. George wheeled suddenly and stood looking first at Gadgem, then at Pawson, and last

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at Todd, as if for confirmation. Then a light broke in upon him—one that played over his face in uncertain flashes.

“And you did this for me?” he asked thoughtfully, fixing his gaze on Gadgem.

“I did, sir,” came the answer in a meek voice, as if he had been detected in filching an apple from a stand; “and I would do it again—do it over and over again. And it has been a great pleasure for me to do it. I might say, sir, that it has been a kind of *extreme* bliss to do it.”

“Why?” There was a tremor now in Temple’s voice that even Todd had never noticed before.

Gadgem turned his head away. “I don’t know, sir,” he replied in a lower tone. “I couldn’t explain it on oath; I don’t care to explain it, sir.” No lie could serve him now—better make a clean breast of the villainy.

“And you still own the gun?” Todd had never seen his master so gentle before—not under a provocation such as this.

“I do, sir.” Gadgem’s voice was barely audible.

“Then it means that you have locked up just that much of your own money for a thing you can never use yourself and can’t sell. Am I right?”

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Gadgem lowered his head and for a moment studied the carpet. His activities, now that the cat was out of the bag, were fair subjects for discussion, but not his charities.

"I prefer not to answer, sir, and—" the last words died in his throat.

"But it's true, isn't it?" persisted St. George. He had never once taken his eyes from Gadgem.

"Yes, it's true."

St. George turned on his heel, walked to the mantel, stood for an instant gazing into the empty fireplace, and then, with that same straightening of his shoulders and lift of his head which his friends knew so well when he was deeply stirred, confronted the collector again:

"Gadgem!" He stopped and caught his breath. For a moment it seemed as if something in his throat choked his utterance. "Gadgem—give me your hand! Do you know you are a gentleman and a thoroughbred! No—don't speak—don't explain. We understand each other. Todd, bring three glasses and hand me what is left of the old Port. And do you join us, Pawson."

Todd, whose eyes had been popping from his head during the entire interview, and who was still amazed at the outcome, suddenly woke to the dangers of the situation: on no account

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must his master's straits be further revealed. He raised his hand as a signal to St. George, who was still looking into Gadgem's eyes, screwed his face into a tangle of puckers and in a husky whisper muttered, so low that only his master could hear:

"Dat Port, Marse George"—one eye now went entirely out in a wink—"is gittin' a leetle mite low" (there hadn't been a drop of it in the house for six months), "an' if——"

"Well, then, that old Brown Sherry—get a fresh bottle, Todd—" St. George was quite honest, and so, for that matter, was Todd: the Brown Sherry had also seen its day.

"Yes, sah—but how would dat fine ol' peach brandy de judge gin ye do? It's sp'ilin' to be tasted, sah." Both eyes were now in eclipse in the effort to apprise his master that with the exception of some badly corked Madeira, Tom Coston's peach brandy was about the only beverage left in the cellar.

"Well, the old peach brandy, then—get it at once and serve it in the large glasses."

CHAPTER XXII

ST. George had now reached the last stage of his poverty. The selling or pawning of the few valuables left him had been consummated and with the greatest delicacy, so as best to spare his feelings. That he had been assisted by hitherto unknown friends who had sacrificed their own balances in his behalf, added temporarily to his comforts but did not lessen the gravity of the present situation. The fact remained that with the exception of a few possible assets he was practically penniless. Every old debt that could be collected—and Gadgem had been a scourge and a flaming sword as the weeks went on in their gathering—had been rounded up. Even his minor interests in two small ground rents had, thanks to Pawson, been cashed some years in advance. His available resources were now represented by some guns, old books, bridles, another saddle, his rare Chinese punch-bowl and its teakwood stand, and a few remaining odds and ends.

He could hope for no payment from the Patapsco—certainly not for some years; nor could

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he raise money even on these hopes, the general opinion being that despite the efforts of John Gorsuch, Rutter, and Harding to punish the guilty and resuscitate the innocent, the bank would finally collapse without a cent being paid the depositors. As for that old family suit, it had been in the courts for forty-odd years and it was likely to be there forty-odd years more before a penny would be realized from the settlement.

Had he been differently constructed—he a man with scores and scores of friends, many of whom would gladly have helped him—he might have made his wants known; but such was not his make-up. The men to whom he could apply—men like Horn, the archdeacon, Murdoch, and one or two others—had no money of their own to spare, and as for wealthier men—men like Rutter and Harding—starvation itself would be preferable to an indebtedness of that kind. Then again, he did not want his poverty known. He had defied Talbot Rutter, and had practically shown him the door when the colonel doubted his ability to pay Harry's debts and still live, and no humiliation would be greater than to see Rutter's satisfaction over his abject surrender. No—if the worst came to the worst, he would slip back to Wesley, where he was always wel-

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come and take up the practice of the law, which he had abandoned since his father's death, and thus earn money enough not to be a burden to Peggy. In the meantime something might turn up. Perhaps another of Gadgem's thumb-screws could be fastened on some delinquent and thus extort a drop or two; or the bank might begin paying ten per cent.; or another prepayment might be squeezed out of a ground rent. If none of these things turned out to his advantage, then Gadgem and Pawson must continue their search for customers who would have the rare opportunity of purchasing, direct "from the private collection of a gentleman," etc., etc., "one first-class English saddle," etc., etc.

"The meantime," however, brought no relief. Indeed so acute had the financial strain become that another and a greater sacrifice—one that fairly cut his heart in two—faced him—the parting with his dogs. That four mouths besides his own and Todd's were too many to feed had of late become painfully evident. He might send them to Wesley, of course, but then he remembered that no one at Tom Coston's ever had a gun in their hands, and they would only be a charge and a nuisance to Peggy. Or he might send them up into Carroll County to a farmer friend, but in that case he would have to pay

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their keep, and he needed the money for those at home. And so he waited and pondered.

A coachman from across the park solved the difficulty a day or two later with a whispered word in Todd's ear, which set the boy's temper ablaze—for he dearly loved the dogs himself—until he had talked it over with Pawson and Gadgem, and had then broken the news to his master as best he could.

“Dem dogs is eatin' dere haid's off,” he began, fidgeting about the table, brushing the crumbs on to a tray only to spill half of them on the floor—“an' Mister Floyd's coachman done say dat his young marster's jes' a-dyin' for 'em an' don't cyar what he pay for 'em, dat is if ye—” but St. George cut him short.

“What did you say, Todd?”

“Why dat young marster dat's jes' come up f'om Ann'rundel—got mo' money den he kin th'ow 'way I yere.”

“And they are eating their heads off, are they?—and he wants to swap his dirty money for my— Yes—I know. They think they can buy anything with a banknote. And it's Floe and Dandy and Sue and Rupert, is it? And I'm to sell them—I who have slept with them and ate with them and hugged them a thousand times. Of course they eat their heads off.

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Yes—don't say another word. Send them up one at a time—Floe first!"

The scene that followed always lingered in his mind. For days thereafter he could not mention their names, even to Todd, without the tears springing to his eyes.

Up the kitchen flight they tumbled—not one at a time, but all in a scramble, bounding straight at him, slobbering all over his face and hands, their paws scraping his clothes—each trying to climb into his lap—big Gordon setters, all four. He swept them off and ranged them in a row before his arm-chair with their noses flat to the carpet, their brown agate eyes following his every movement.

"Todd says you eat too much, you damned rascals!" he cried in enforced gayety, leaning forward, shaking his finger in their faces. "What the devil do you mean, coming into a gentleman's private apartments and eating him out of house and home!—and that's what you're doing. I'm going to sell you!—do you hear that?—sell you to some stingy curmudgeon who'll starve you to death, and that's what you deserve! . . . Come here, Floe—you dear old doggie, you—nice Floe! . . . Here, Dandy—Rupert—Sue!" They were all in his arms, their cold noses snuggled under his warm chin. But this time

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he didn't care what they did to his clothes—nor what he did to them. He was alone; Todd had gone down to the kitchen—only he and the four companions so dear to his heart. “Come here, you imp of the devil,” he continued, rubbing Floe's ears—he loved her best—pinching her nose until her teeth showed; patting her flanks, crooning over her as a woman would over a child, talking to himself all the time. “I wonder if Floyd will be good to them! If I thought he wouldn't I'd rather starve than— No—I reckon it's all right—he's got plenty of room and plenty of people to look after them.” Then he rose from his chair and drew his hand across his forehead. “Got to sell my dogs, eh? Turned traitor, have you, Mr. Temple, and gone back on your best friends? By God! I wonder what will come next?” He strode across the room, rang for Todd, and bending down loosened a collar from Dandy's neck, on which his own name was engraved, “St. George Wilmot Temple, Esquire.” “Esquire, eh?” he muttered, reading the plate. “What a damned lie! Property of a pauper living on pawnshops and a bill collector! Nice piece of business, St. George—fine record for your blood and breeding! Ah, Todd—that you? Well, take them downstairs and send word to Mr. Floyd's man to call for them to-night,

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and when you come back I'll have a letter ready for you. Come here, you rascals, and let me hug one or two of you. Good Floe—good doggie.” Then the long-fought choke in his throat strangled him. “Take them away, Todd,” he said in a husky voice, straightening his shoulders as if the better to get his breath, and with a deep indrawn sigh walked slowly into his bedroom and shut the door behind him.

Half an hour later there followed a short note, written on one of his few remaining sheets of English paper, addressed to the new owner, in which he informed that gentleman that he bespoke for his late companions the same care and attention which he had always given them himself, and which they so richly deserved, and which he felt sure they would continue to receive while in the service of his esteemed and honored correspondent. This he sealed in wax and stamped with his crest; and this was duly delivered by Todd—and so the painful incident had come to an end.

The dogs disposed of, there still remained to him another issue to meet—the wages he owed Jemima. Although she had not allowed the subject to pass her lips—not even to Todd—St. George knew that she needed the money—she being a free woman and her earnings her

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own—not a master's. He had twice before determined to set aside enough money from former cash receipts to liquidate Jemima's debt—once from the proceeds of Gadgem's gun and again from what Floyd paid him for the dogs—but Todd had insisted with such vehemence that he needed it for the marketing, that he had let it go over.

The one remaining object of real value was the famous loving-cup. With this turned into money he would be able to pay Jemima in full. For days he debated the matter with himself, putting the question in a dozen different lights: it was not really *his* cup, but belonged to the family, he being only its custodian; it would reflect on his personal honor if he traded so distinguished a gift—one marking the esteem in which his dead father had been held, etc. Then the round, good-natured face and bent figure of his old stand-by and comfort—who had worked for him and for his father almost all her life—rose before him, she bending over her tubs earning the bread to keep her alive, and with this picture in his mind all his fine-spun theories vanished into thin air. Todd was summoned and thus the last connecting link between the past and present was broken and the precious heirloom turned over to Kirk, the silversmith, who the next day found

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a purchaser with one of the French secretaries in Washington, a descendant of the marquis.

With the whole of the purchase money in his hands and his mind firmly made up he rang for his servant:

"Come along, Todd—show me where Aunt Jemima lives—it's somewhere down by the market, I hear—I'm going now."

The darky's face got as near white as his skin would allow: this was the last thing he had expected.

"Dat ain't no fit place for ye, Marse George," he stammered. "I'll go an' git her an' bring her up; she tol' me when I carried dat las' washin' down she wuz a-comin' dis week."

"No, her sister is sick and she is needed where she is. Get your basket and come along—you can do your marketing down there. Bring me my hat and cane. What's the matter with her sister, do you know?"

Again the darky hedged: "Dunno, sah—some kin' o' mis'ry in her back, I reckon. Las' time Aunt Jemima was yere she say de doctor 'lowed her kittens was 'fected." (It was another invalid limping past the front steps who had put that in his head.)

St. George roared: "Well, whatever she's got, I'm going to pay my respects to her; I've neg-

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lected Aunt Jemima too long. No—my best hat—don't forget that I'm going to call on a very distinguished colored lady. Come, out with it. How far does she live from the market? ”

“Jes' 'bout's far's from yere to de church. Is you gwine now? I got a heap o' cleanin' ter do—dem steps is all gormed up, dey's dat dirty. Maybe we better go when——”

“Not another word out of you! I'm going now.” He could feel the money in his pocket and he could not wait. “Get your basket.”

Todd led the way and the two crossed the park and struck out for the lower part of the city, near Jones Falls, into a district surrounded by one- and two-story houses inhabited by the poorer class of whites and the more well-to-do free negroes. Here the streets, especially those which ran to the wharves, were narrow and ill-paved, their rough cobbles being often obstructed by idle drays, heavy anchors, and rusting anchor-chains, all on free storage. Up one of these crooked streets, screened from the brick sidewalk by a measly wooden fence, stood a two-story wooden house, its front yard decorated with clothes-lines running criss-cross from thumbs of fence-posts to fingers of shutters—a sort of cat's-cradle along whose meshes Aunt Jemima hung her wet clothes.

On this particular day what was left of St.

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George Temple's wardrobe and bed linen, with the exception of what that gentleman had on his back, was either waving in the cool air of the morning or being clothes-pinned so that it might wave later on.

Todd's anxious face was the first to thrust itself from around the corner of a sagging, sloppy sheet. The two had entered the gate in the fence at the same moment, but St. George had been lost in the maze of dripping linen.

"Go 'way f'om dar, you fool nigger, mussin' up my wash! Keep yo' black haid off'er dem sheets, I tell ye, 'fo' I smack ye! An' ye needn't come down yere a-sassin' me 'bout Marse George's clo'es, 'cause dey ain't done—" (here Temple's head came into view, his face in a broad smile). "Well, fer de lan's sakes, Marse George. What ye come down yere fer? Here—lemme git dat basket outer yo' way—No, dem hands ain't fit fer nobody to shake—My!—but I's mighty glad ter see ye! Don't tell me ye come fer dat wash—I been so pestered wid de weather—nothin' don't dry."

He had dodged a wet sheet and had the old woman by the hand now, her face in a broad grin at sight of him.

"No, aunty—I came down to pay you some money."

"You don't owe me no money—leastwise

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you don't owe me nothin' till ye kin pay it," and she darted an annihilating glance at Todd.

"Yes, I do—but let me see where you live. What a fine place—plenty of room except on wash-days. All those mine?—I didn't know I had that many clothes left. Pick up that basket, Todd, and bring it in for aunty." The two made their way between the wet linen and found themselves in front of the dwelling. "And is this all yours?"

"De fust flo' front an' back is mine an' de top flo' I rents out. Got a white man in dere now dat works in de lumber yard. Jes' come up an' see how I fixed it up."

"And tell me about your sister—is she better?" he continued.

The old woman put her arms akimbo: "Lawd bress ye, Marse George!—who done tol' ye dat fool lie! I ain't got no sister—not yere!"

"Why, I thought you couldn't come back to me because you had to nurse some member of your family who had kittens, or some such misery in her spine—wasn't that it, Todd?" said St. George trying to conceal a smile.

Todd shot a beseeching look at Jemima to confirm his picturesque yarn, but the old woman would have none of it.

"Dere ain't been nobody to tek care ob but

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des me. I come yere 'cause I knowed ye didn't hab no money to keep me, an' I got back de ol' furniture what I had fo' I come to lib wid ye, an' went to washin', an' if dat yaller skunk's been tellin' any lies 'bout me I'm gwineter wring his neck."

"No, let Todd alone," laughed St. George, his heart warming to the old woman at this further proof of her love for him. "The Lord has already forgiven him that lie, and so have I. And now what have you got upstairs?"

They had mounted the steps by this time and St. George was peering into a clean, simply furnished room. "First rate, aunty—your lumber-yard man is in luck. And now put that in your pocket," and he handed her the package.

"What's dis?"

"Nearly half a year's wages."

"I ain't gwineter take it," she snapped back in a positive tone.

St. George laid his hand tenderly on the old woman's shoulder. She had served him faithfully for many years and he was very fond of her.

"Tuck it in your bosom, aunty—it should have been paid long ago."

She looked at him shrewdly: "Did de bank pay ye yit, Marse George?"

"No."

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“Den I ain’t gwineter tech it—I ain’t gwine-ter tech a fip ob it!” she exploded. “How I know ye ain’t a-sufferin’ fer it! See dat wash?—an’ I got anudder room to rent if I’m min’ ter scrunch up a leetle mo’. I kin git ’long.”

St. George’s hand again tightened on her shoulder.

“Take it when you can get it, aunty,” he said in a more serious tone, and turning on his heel joined Todd below, leaving the old woman in tears at the top of the stairs, the money on her limp outspread fingers.

All the way back to his home—they had stopped to replenish the larder at the market—St. George kept up his spirits. Absurd as it was—he a man tottering on the brink of dire poverty—the situation from his stand-point was far from perilous. He had discharged the one debt that had caused him the most anxiety—the money due the faithful old cook; he had a basketful of good things—among them half a dozen quail and three diamond-back terrapin—the cheapest food in the market—and he had funds left for his immediate wants.

With this feeling of contentment permeating his mind something of the old feeling of independence, with its indifference toward the dollar and what it meant and could bring him, welled

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up in his heart. For a time at least the spectre of debt lay hidden. A certain old-time happiness began to show itself in his face and bearing. So evident was this that before many days had passed even Todd noticed the return of his old buoyancy, and so felt privileged to discuss his own feelings, now that the secret of their mode of earning a common livelihood was no longer a bugbear to his master.

“Dem taters what we got outer de extry sterrups of dat ridin’-saddle is mos’ gone,” he ventured one morning at breakfast, when the remains of the cup money had reached a low ebb. “Shall I tote the udder saddle down to dat Gadgem man”—(he never called him anything else, although of late he had conceived a marked respect for the collector)—“or shall I keep it fer some mo’ sugar?”

“What else is short, Todd?” said St. George, good-naturedly, helping himself to another piece of corn bread.

“Well, dere’s plenty ob dose decanter crackers and de pair ob andirons is still holdin’ out wid de mango pickles an’ de cheese, but dat pair ob ridin’-boots is mos’ gone. We got half barrel ob flour an’ a bag o’ coffee, ye ’member, wid dem boots. I done seen some smoked herrin’ in de market yisterday mawnin’ ’d go mighty

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good wid de buckwheat cakes an' sugar-house 'lasses—only we ain't got no 'lasses. I was a-thinkin' dem two ol' cheers in de garret 'd come in handy; ain't nobody sot in 'em since I been yere; de bottoms is outen one o' dem, but de legs an' backs is good 'nough fer a quart o' 'lasses. I kin take 'em down to de same place dat Gadgem man tol' me to take de big brass shovel an' tongs——”

“All right, Todd,” rejoined St. George, highly amused at the boy's economic resources. “Anything that Mr. Gadgem recommends I agree to. Yes—take him the chairs—both of them.”

Even the men at the club had noticed the change and congratulated him on his good spirits. None of them knew of his desperate straits, although many of them had remarked on the differences in his hospitality, while some of the younger gallants—men who made a study of the height and roll of the collars of their coats and the latest cut of waistcoats—especially the increased width of the frogs on the lapels—had whispered to each other that Temple's clothes certainly needed overhauling; more particularly his shirts, which were much the worse for wear: one critic laying the seeming indifference to the carelessness of a man who was growing old; another shaking his head with the remark that it

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was Poole's bill which was growing old — older by a good deal than the clothes, and that it would have to be patched and darned with one of old George Brown's (the banker's) scraps of paper before the wearer could regain his reputation of being the best-dressed man in or out of the club.

None of these lapses from his former well-to-do estate made any difference, however, to St. George's intimates when it came to the selection of important guests for places at table or to assist in the success of some unusual function. Almost every one in and around Kennedy Square had been crippled in their finances by the failure, not only of the Patapsco, but by kindred institutions, during the preceding few years. Why, then, they argued, should any one criticise such economies as Temple was practising? He was still living in his house with his servants—one or two less, perhaps—but still in comfort, and if he did not entertain as heretofore, what of it? His old love of sport, as was shown by his frequent visits to his estates on the Eastern Shore, might account for some of the changes in his hospitable habits, there not being money enough to keep up establishments both in country and town. These changes, of course, could only be temporary. His properties on the peninsula—(almost

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everybody had "properties" in those days, whether imaginary or real)—would come up some day, and then all would be well again.

The House of Seymour was particularly in the dark. The Honorable Prim, in his dense ignorance, had even asked St. George to join in one of his commercial enterprises—the building of a new clipper ship—while Kate, who had never waited five minutes in all her life for anything that a dollar could buy, had begged a subscription for a charity she was managing, and which she received with a kiss and a laugh, and without a moment's hesitation, from a purse shrinking steadily by the hour.

Only when some idle jest or well-meant inquiry diverted his mind to the chain of events leading up to Harry's exile was his insistent cheerfulness under his fast accumulating misfortunes ever checked.

Todd was the cruel disturber on this particular day, with a bit of information which, by reason of its source, St. George judged must be true, and which because of its import brought him infinite pain.

"Purty soon we won't hab 'nough spoons to stir a toddy wid," Todd had begun. "I tell ye, Marse George, dey ain't none o' dem gwine down in dere pockets till de constable gits 'em.

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I jes' wish Marse Harry was yere—he'd fix 'em. 'Fo' dey knowed whar dey wuz he'd hab 'em full o' holes. Dat red-haired, no-count gemman what's a-makin' up to Miss Kate is gwineter git her fo' sho——"

It was here that St. George had raised his head, his heart in his mouth.

"How do you know, Todd?" he asked in a serious tone. He had long since ceased correcting Todd for his outspoken reflections on Kate's suitor as a useless expenditure of time.

"'Cause Mammy Henny done tol' Aunt Jemima so—an' she purty nigh cried her eyes out when she said it. Ye ain't heared nothin' 'bout Marse Harry comin' home, is ye?"

"No—not a word—not for many months, Todd. He's up in the mountains, so his mother tells me."

Whereupon Todd had gulped down an imprecation expressive of his feelings and had gone about his duties, while St. George had buried himself in his easy-chair, his eyes fixed on vacancy, his soul all the more a-hungered for the boy he loved. He wondered where the lad was—why he hadn't written. Whether the fever had overtaken him and he laid up in some filthy hospital. Almost every week his mother had either come herself or sent in for news, ac-

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accompanied by messages expressing some new phase of her anxiety. Or had he grown and broadened out and become big and strong?—whom had he met, and how had they treated him?—and would he want to leave home again when once he came back? Then, as always, there came a feeling of intense relief. He thanked God that Harry *wasn't* at home; a daily witness of the shrinkage of his resources and the shifts to which he was being put. This would be ten times worse for him to bear than the loss of the boy's companionship. Harry would then upbraid him for the sacrifices he had made for him, as if he would not take every step over again! Take them!—of course he would take them!—so would any other gentleman. Not to have come to Harry's rescue in that the most critical hour of his life, when he was disowned by his father, rejected by his sweetheart, and hounded by creditors, not one of whom did he justly owe, was unthinkable, absolutely unthinkable, and not worth a moment's consideration.

And so he would sit and muse, his head in his hand, his well-rounded legs stretched toward the fire, his white, shapely fingers tapping the arms of his chair—each click so many telegraphic records of the workings of his mind.

CHAPTER XXIII

WITH the closing in of the autumn and the coming of the first winter cold, the denizens of Kennedy Square gave themselves over to the season's entertainments. Mrs. Cheston, as was her usual custom, issued invitations for a ball—this one in honor of the officers who had distinguished themselves in the Mexican War. Major Clayton, Bowdoin, the Murdochs, Stirrings, and Howards—all persons of the highest quality—inaugurated a series of chess tournaments, the several players and those who came to look on to be thereafter comforted with such toothsome solids as wild turkey, terrapin, and olio, and such delectable liquids as were stored in the cellars of their hosts. Old Judge Pancoast, yielding to the general demand, gave an oyster roast—his enormous kitchen being the place of all others for such a function. On this occasion two long wooden tables were scoured to an unprecedented whiteness—the young girls in white aprons and the young men in white jackets serving as waiters—and laid with wooden plates, and two big wooden bowls—one for the hot,

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sizzling shells just off their bed of hickory coals banked on the kitchen hearth, and the other for the empty ones—the fun continuing until the wee sma' hours of the morning.

The Honorable Prim and his charming daughter, not to be outdone by their neighbors, cleared the front drawing-room of its heavy furniture, covered every inch of the tufted carpet with linen crash, and with old black Jones as fiddler and M. Robinette—a French exile—as instructor in the cutting of pigeon wings and the proper turning out of ankles and toes, opened the first of a series of morning soirées for the young folk of the neighborhood, to which were invited not only their mothers, but their black mammies as well.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Horn, not having any blithesome daughter, nor any full-grown son—Oliver being but a child of six—and Richard and his charming wife having long since given up their dancing-slippers—were good enough to announce—(and it was astonishing what an excitement it raised)—that “On the Monday night following Mr. Horn would read aloud, to such of his friends as would do him the honor of being present, the latest Christmas story by Mr. Charles Dickens, entitled ‘The Cricket on the Hearth.’” For this occasion Mr. Kennedy had

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loaned him his own copy, one of the earliest bound volumes, bearing on its fly-leaf an inscription in the great master's own handwriting, in which he thanked the distinguished author of "Swallow Barn" for the many kindnesses he had shown him during his visit to America, and begged his indulgence for his third attempt to express between covers the sentiment and feeling of the Christmas season.

Not that this was an unusual form of entertainment, nor one that excited special comment. Almost every neighborhood had its morning (and often its evening) "Readings," presided over by some one who read well and without fatigue—some sweet old maid, perhaps, who knew how to grow old gracefully. At these times a table would be rolled into the library by the deferential servant of the house, on which he would place the dear lady's spectacles and a book, its ivory marker showing where the last reading had ended—it might be Prescott's "Ferdinand and Isabella," or Irving's "Granada," or Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," or, perhaps, Dickens's "Martin Chuzzlewit."

At eleven o'clock the girls would begin to arrive, each one bringing her needle-work of some kind—worsted, or embroidery, or knitting—something she could manage without discomfort

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to herself or anybody about her, and when the last young lady was in her seat, the same noiseless darky would tiptoe in and take his place behind the old maid's chair. Then he would slip a stool under her absurdly small slippers and tiptoe out again, shutting the door behind him as quietly as if he found the dear lady asleep—and so the reading would begin.

A reading by Richard, however, was always an event of unusual importance, and an invitation to be present was never declined whether received by letter or by word of mouth.

St. George had been looking forward eagerly to the night, and when the shadows began to fall in his now almost bare bedroom, he sent for Todd to help him dress.

“Have you got a shirt for me, Todd?”

“Got seben ob 'em. Dey wants a li'l' trimmin' roun' de aidges, but I reckon we kin make 'em do—Aunt Jemima sont 'em home dis mawnin'. She's been a-workin' on 'em, she says. Looks ter me like a goat had a moufful outer dis yere sleeve, but I dassent tell 'er so. Lot o' dem butters wanderin' roun' dat Marsh market lookin' fer sumpin' to eat; lemme gib dem boots anudder tech.”

Todd skipped downstairs with the boots and St. George continued dressing; selecting his best

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and most becoming scarf; pinning down the lapels of his buff waistcoat; scissoring the points of his high collar, and with Todd's assistance working his arms between the slits in the silk lining of the sleeves of his blue cloth, brass-buttoned coat, which he finally pulled into place across his chest.

And a well-dressed man he was in spite of the frayed edges of his collar and shirt ruffles and the shiny spots in his trousers and coat where the nap was worn smooth, nor was there any man of his age who wore his clothes as well, no matter what their condition, or one who made so debonair an appearance.

Pawson was of that opinion to-night when St. George, his toilet complete, joined him at the bottom of the stairs. Indeed he thought he had never seen his client look better—a discovery which sent a spasm of satisfaction through his long body, for he had a piece of important news to tell him, and had been trying all day to make up his mind how best to break it.

“You look younger, Mr. Temple,” he began, “and, if you will allow me to say so, handsomer, every day. Your trip to the Eastern Shore last spring did you no end of good,” and the young attorney crooked his long neck and elevated his eyebrows and the corners of his

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mouth in the effort to give to his sinuous body a semblance of mirth.

“Thank you, Pawson,” bowed St. George, graciously. “You are really most kind, but that is because you are stone blind. My shirt is full of holes, and it is quite likely I shall have to stand all the evening for fear of splitting the knees of my breeches. Come—out with it”—he laughed—“there is something you have to tell me or you would not be waiting for me here at this hour in the cold hall.”

Pawson smiled faintly, then his eyebrows lost their identity in some well-defined wrinkles in his forehead.

“I have, sir, a most unpleasant thing to tell you—a very unpleasant thing. When I tried this morning for a few days’ grace on that last overdue payment, the agent informed me, to my great surprise, that Mr. John Gorsuch had bought the mortgage and would thereafter collect the interest in person. I am not sure, of course, but I am afraid Colonel Rutter is behind the purchase. If he is we must be prepared to face the worst should he still feel toward you as he did when you and he”—and he jerked his thumb meaningly in the direction of the dining-room—“had it out—in there.”

St. George compressed his lips. “And so

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Rutter holds the big end of the whip after all, does he?" he exclaimed with some heat. "He will find the skin on my back not a very valuable asset, but he is welcome to it. He has about everything else."

"But I'd rather pay it somehow if we could," rejoined Pawson in a furtive way—as if he had something up his sleeve he dare not spring upon him.

"Yes—of course you would," retorted St. George with a cynical laugh, slipping on his gloves. "Pay it?—of course pay it. Pay everything and everybody! What do you think I'd bring at auction, Pawson? I'm white, you know, and so I can't be sold on the block—but the doctors might offer you a trifle for cutting-up purposes. Bah! Hand me my coat, Todd."

A deprecatory smile flitted across the long, thin face of the attorney. He saw that St. George was in no mood for serious things, and yet something must be done; certainly before the arrival of Gorsuch himself, who was known to be an exact man of business and who would have his rights, no matter who suffered.

"I had a little plan, sir—but you might not fall in with it. It would, perhaps, be only temporary, but it is all I can think of. I had an

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applicant this morning—in fact it came within an hour after I had heard the news. It seemed almost providential, sir.”

St. George was facing the door, ready to leave the house, his shoulders still bent forward so that Todd could adjust his heavy cloak the better, when for the first time the anxious tone in Pawson’s voice caught his attention. As the words fell from the attorney’s lips he straightened, and Todd stepped back, the garment still in the darky’s hands.

“An applicant for what?” he inquired in a graver tone. He was not surprised—nothing surprised him in these days—he was only curious.

“For the rooms you occupy. I can get enough for them, sir, not only to clear up the back interest, but to keep the mortgage alive and——”

St. George’s face paled as the full meaning of Pawson’s proposal dawned in his mind. That was the last thing he had expected.

“Turn me into the street, eh?” There was a note of pained surprise in his voice.

“I don’t want you to put it that way, sir.” His heart really bled for him—it was all he could do to control himself.

“How the devil else can I put it?”

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"Well, I thought you might want to do a little shooting, sir."

"Shooting! What with? One of Gadgem's guns? Hire it of him, eh, and steal the powder and shot!" he cried savagely.

"Yes—if you saw fit, sir. Gadgem, I am sure, would be most willing, and you can always get plenty of ammunition. Anyway, you might pass a few months with your kinsfolk on the Eastern Shore, whether you hunted or not; it did you so much good before. The winter here is always wearing, sloppy and wet. I've heard you say so repeatedly." He had not taken his eyes from his face; he knew this was St. George's final stage, and he knew too that he would never again enter the home he loved; but this last he could not tell him outright. He would rather have cut his right hand off than tell him at all. Being even the humblest instrument in the exiling of a man like St. George Wilmot Temple was in itself a torture.

"And when do you want me to quit?" he said calmly. "I suppose I can evacuate like an officer and a gentleman and carry my side-arms with me—my father's cane, for instance, that I can neither sell nor pawn, and a case of razors which are past sharpening?" and his smile broadened as the humor of the thing stole over him.

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"Well, sir, it ought to be done," continued Pawson in his most serious tone, ignoring the sacrifice—(there was nothing funny in the situation to the attorney)—"well—I should say—right away. To-morrow, perhaps. This news of Gorsuch has come very sudden, you know. If I can show him that the new tenant has moved in already he might wait until his first month's rent was paid. You see that——"

"Oh, yes, Pawson, I see—see it all clear as day," interrupted St. George—"have been seeing it for some months past, although neither you nor Gadgem seem to have been aware of that fact." This came with so grave a tone that Pawson raised his eyes inquiringly. "And who is this man," Temple went on, "who wants to step into my shoes? Be sure you tell him they are half-soled," and he held up one boot. "He might want to dance or hunt in them—and his toes would be out the first thing he knew."

"He is Mr. Gorsuch's attorney, sir, a Mr. Fogbin," Pawson answered, omitting any reference to the boots and still concerned over the gravity of the situation. "He did some work once for Colonel Rutter, and that's how Gorsuch got hold of him. That's why I suspect the colonel. This would make the interest sure,

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you see—rather a sly game, is it not, sir? One I did not expect.”

St. George pondered for a moment, and his eye fell on his servant.

“And what will I do with Todd?”

The darky’s eyes had been rolling round in his head as the talk continued, Pawson, knowing how leaky he was, having told him nothing of the impending calamity for fear he would break it to his master in the wrong way.

“I should say take him with you,” came the positive answer.

“Take him with me! You didn’t think I would be separated from him, did you?” cried St. George, indignantly, the first note of positive anger he had yet shown.

“I didn’t think anything about it, sir,” and he looked at Todd apologetically.

“Well, after this please remember, Mr. Pawson, that where I go Todd goes.”

The darky leaned forward as if to seize St. George’s hand; his eyes filled and his lips began to tremble. He would rather have died than have left his master.

St. George walked to the door, threw it open, and stood for an instant, his eyes fixed on the bare trees in the park. He turned and faced the two again:

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“Todd!”

“Yes, Marse George—” Two hot ragged tears still lingered on the darky’s eyelids.

“To-day is Monday, is it not?—and to-morrow is boat day?”

“Yes, Marse George,” came the trembling answer.

“All right, Pawson, I’ll go. Let Talbot Rutter have the rest—he’s welcome to it. Now for my cloak, Todd—so—and my neckerchief and cane. Thank you very much, Pawson. You have been very kind about it all, and I know quite well what it has cost you to tell me this. You can’t help—neither can I—neither, for that matter, can Gorsuch—nor is it his fault. It is Rutter’s, and he will one day get his reckoning. Good-night—don’t sit up too late. I am going to Mr. Horn’s to spend the evening. Walk along with me through the park, Todd, so I can talk to you. And, Todd,” he continued when they had entered the path and were bending their steps to the Horn house, “I want you to gather together to-morrow what are left of my clothes and pack them in one of those hair trunks upstairs—and your own things in another. Never mind about waiting for the wash. I’m going down to aunt Jemima’s myself in the morning and will fix it so she can send the rest

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to me later on. I owe her a small balance and must see her once more before I leave. Now go home and get to bed; you have been losing too much sleep of late."

And yet he was not cast down, nor did his courage fail him. Long before the darky's obedient figure had disappeared his natural buoyancy had again asserted itself—or perhaps the philosophy which always sustains a true gentleman in his hour of need had come to his assistance. He fully realized what this last cowardly blow meant. One after another his several belongings had vanished: his priceless family heirlooms; his dogs; and now the home of his ancestors. He was even denied further shelter within its walls. But there were no regrets; his conscience still sustained him; he would live it all over again. In his determination to keep to his standards he had tried to stop a freshet with a shovelful of clay; that was all. It was a foolhardy attempt, no doubt, but he would have been heartily ashamed of himself if he had not made the effort. Wesley, of course, was not a very exciting place in which to spend the winter, but it was better than being under obligations to Talbot Rutter; and then he could doubtless earn enough at the law to pay his board—at least he would try.

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He had reached the end of the walk and had already caught the glow of the overhead lantern in the hall of the Horn mansion lighting up the varied costumes of the guests as Malachi swung back the front door, revealing the girls in their pink and white nubias, the gallants in long cloaks with scarlet linings, the older men in mufflers, and the mothers and grandmothers in silk hoods. There was no question of Richard's popularity.

"Clar to goodness, Marse George, you is a sight for sore eyes," cried Malachi, unhooking the clasp of the velvet collar and helping him off with his cloak. "I ain't never seen ye looking spryer! Yes, sah, Marse Richard's inside and he'll be mighty glad ye come. Yes—jedge—jes's soon as I— Dat's it, mistis—I'll take dat shawl— No, sah, Marse Richard ain't begun yit. Dis way, ladies," and so it had gone on since the opening rat-a-tat-tat on the old brass knocker had announced the arrival of the first guest.

Nor was there any question that everybody who could by any possibility have availed themselves of Richard's invitation had put in an appearance. Most of the men from the club known to these pages were present, together with their wives and children—those who were

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old enough to sit up late; and Nathan Gill, without his flute this time, but with ears wide open—he was beginning to get gray, was Nathan, although he wouldn't admit it; and Miss Virginia Clendenning in high waist and voluminous skirts, fluffy side curls, and a new gold chain for her eyeglasses—gold rims, too, of course—not to mention the Murdochs, Stirlings, Gatchells, Captain Warfield and his daughter, Bowdoin, and Purviance. They were all there; everybody, in fact, who could squeeze inside the drawing-room; while those who couldn't filled the hall and even the stairs—wherever Richard's voice could be heard.

St. George edged into the packed room, swept his glance over the throng, and made his way through the laughing groups, greeting every one right and left, old and young, as he moved—a kiss here on the upturned cheek of some pretty girl whom he had carried in his arms when a baby; a caressing pat of approbation on some young gallant's shoulder; a bend of the head in respectful homage to those he knew but slightly—the Baroness de Trobiand, Mrs. Cheston's friend, being one of them; a hearty hand held out to the men who had been away for the summer—interrupted now and then by some such sally from a young bride as—“Oh, you

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mean Uncle George! No—I'm not going to love you any more! You promised you would come to my party and you didn't, and my cotillon was all spoiled!" or a—"Why, Temple, you dear man!—I'm so glad to see you! Don't forget my dinner on Thursday. The Secretary is coming and I want you to sit between him and Lord Atherton"—a sort of triumphal procession, really—until he reached the end of the room and stood at Kate's side.

"Well, sweetheart!" he cried gayly, caressing her soft hand before his fingers closed over it. Then his face hardened. "Ah, Mr. Willits! So you, too, must come under the spell of Mr. Horn's voice," and without waiting for a reply continued as if nothing had interrupted the joy of his greeting. "You should sit down somewhere, my dear Kate—get as near to Richard as you can, so you can watch his face—that's the best part of it. And I should advise you, too, Mr. Willits, to miss none of his words—it will be something you will remember all your life."

Kate looked up in his face with a satisfied smile. She was more than glad that her Uncle George was so gracious to her escort, especially to-night when he was to meet a good many people for the first time.

"I'll take the stool, then, dear Uncle George,"

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she answered with a merry laugh. "Go get it, please, Mr. Willits—the one under the sofa." Then, with a toss of her head and a coquettish smile at St. George: "What a gadabout you are; do you know I've been three times to see you, and not a soul in your house and the front door wide open, and everything done up in curl papers as if you were going to move away for good and all and never coming back? And do you know that you haven't been near me for a whole week? What do you mean by breaking my heart? Thank you, Mr. Willits; put the stool right here, so I can look up into Mr. Horn's eyes as Uncle George wants me to. I've known the time, sir"—and she arched her brows at St. George—"when you would be delighted to have me look my prettiest at you, but now before I am half-way across the park you slip out of the basement door to avoid me and— No!—no—no apologies—you are just tired of me!"

St. George laughed gayly in return, his palms flattened against each other and held out in supplication; but he made no defence. He was studying the couple, his mind on the bearing and manner of the young man toward the woman he was pursuing so relentlessly. He saw that he had completely regained his health, his clear eyes and ruddy skin and the spring with which

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he moved denoting a man in perfect physical condition. He discovered, too, that he was extremely well dressed and his costume all that it should be—especially the plum-colored coat, which fitted his shoulders to perfection; his linen of the whitest and finest, each ruffle in flutes; the waistcoat embroidered in silk; the pumps of the proper shape and the stockings all that could be desired—except perhaps—and a grim smile crossed his face—that the silk scarf was a shade out of key with the prevailing color of his make-up, particularly his hair; but, then, that was to be expected of a man who had a slight flaw in his ancestry. He wondered if she had noticed it and studied her face for an answer. No! She had not noticed it. In fact there were very many things she was overlooking in these last days of his wooing, he thought to himself.

Suddenly he became occupied with Kate's beauty. He thought he had never seen her so bewitching or in such good spirits. From his six feet and an inch of vantage his eyes followed her sloping shoulders and tapering arms and rested on her laughing, happy face—rose-colored in the soft light of the candles—a film of lace looped at her elbows, her wonderful hair caught in a coil at the back: not the prevailing fashion, but one most becoming to her. What had not

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this admixture of Scotch and Virginia blood—this intermingling of robust independence with the gentle, yielding feminine qualities of the Southern-born woman—done for this girl?

Richard clapped his hands to attract attention, and advancing a step in front of the big easy-chair which Malachi had just pulled out for him, raised his fingers to command silence.

All eyes were instantly turned his way. Alert and magnetic, dignified and charming, he stood in the full glow of the overhead chandelier, its light falling upon his snuff-brown coat with its brass buttons, pale-yellow waistcoat, and the fluff of white silk about his throat—his grave, thoughtful face turned toward Kate as his nearest guest, his glance sweeping the crowded room as if to be sure that everybody was at ease; Malachi close behind awaiting his master's orders to further adjust the chair and reading-lamp.

In the interim of the hush Kate had settled herself at Richard's feet on the low stool that Willits had brought, the young man standing behind her, the two making a picture that attracted general attention; some wondering at her choice, while others were outspoken in their admiration of the pair who seemed so wonderfully suited to each other.

"I have a rare story," Richard began, "to

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read to you to-night, my good friends, one you will never forget; one, indeed, which I am sure the world at large will never forget. I shall read it as best I can, begging your indulgence especially in rendering the dialect parts, which, if badly done, often mar both the pathos and humor of the text." Here he settled himself in his chair and picked up the small volume, *Malachi*, now that his service was over, tiptoeing out to his place in the hall so as to be ready for belated arrivals.

The room grew silent. Even Mrs. Cheston, who rarely ceased talking when she had anything to say—and she generally did have something to say—folded her hands in her lap and settled herself in her arm-chair, her whole attention fastened on the reader. St. George, who had been talking to her, moved up a chair so he could watch Kate's face the better.

Again Richard raised his voice:

"The time is of the present, and the scene is laid in one of those small towns outside London. I shall read the whole story, omitting no word of the text, for only then will you fully grasp the beauty of the author's style."

He began in low, clear tones reciting the contest between the hum of the kettle and the chirp of the cricket; the music of his voice lending

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added charm to the dual song. Then there followed in constantly increasing intensity the happy home life of bewitching Dot Perrybingle and her matter-of-fact husband, John the Carrier, with sleepy Tilly Slowboy and the Baby to fill out the picture; the gradual unfolding of the events that led up to the cruel marriage about to take place between old Tackleton, the mean toy merchant, and sweet May Fielding, in love with the sailor boy, Edward, lost at sea; the finding of the mysterious deaf old man by John the Carrier, and the bringing him home in his cart to Dot, who kept him all night because his friends had not called for him; the rapid growth of a love affair between Dot and this old man, who turned out to be a handsome young fellow; the heart-rending discovery by John, through the spying of Tackleton, that Dot was untrue to him, she meeting the man clandestinely and adjusting the disguise for him, laughing all the while at the ruse she was helping him to play; the grief of John when he realized the truth, he sitting all night alone by the fire trying to make up his mind whether he would creep upstairs and murder the villain who had stolen the heart of his little Dot, or forgive her because he was so much older than she and it was, therefore, natural for her to love a younger man; and

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finally the preparations at the church, where Tackleton was to wed the beautiful May Fielding, who, broken-hearted over the death of her sailor boy, had at last succumbed to her mother's wishes and consented to join Tackleton at the altar.

For an hour Richard's well-modulated, full-toned voice rolled on, the circle drawing closer and closer with their ears and hearts, as the characters, one after another, became real and alive under the reader's magical rendering. Dot Perrybingle's cheery, laughing accents; Tackleton's sharp, rasping tones; John the Carrier's simple, straightforward utterances and the soft, timid cadence of old Caleb, the toy maker—(drowned Edward's father)—and his blind daughter Bertha were recognized as soon as the reader voiced their speech. So thrilling was the story of their several joys and sorrows that Kate, unconscious of her surroundings, had slipped from her low stool, and with the weight of her body resting on her knees, sat searching Richard's face, the better to catch every word that fell from his lips.

To heighten the effect of what was the most dramatic part of the story—the return of the wedding party to the Carrier's house, where Dot, Caleb, and his blind daughter awaited

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them—Richard paused for a moment as if to rest his voice—the room the while deathly still, the loosening of a pent-up breath now and then showing how tense was the emotion. Then he went on:

“Are those wheels upon the road, Bertha?” cried Dot. “You’ve a quick ear, Bertha— And now you hear them stopping at the garden gate! And now you hear a step outside the door—the same step, Bertha, is it not— And now ——”

Dot uttered a wild cry of uncontrollable delight, and running up to Caleb put her hand upon his eyes, as a young man rushed into the room, and, flinging away his hat into the air, came sweeping down upon them.

“Is it over?” cried Dot.

“Yes!”

“Happily over?”

“Yes!”

“Do you recollect the voice, dear Caleb? Did you ever hear the like of it before?” cried Dot.

“If my boy Edward in the Golden South Americas was alive——” cried Caleb, trembling.

“He is alive!” shrieked Dot, removing her hands from his eyes and clapping them in ecstasy; “look at him! See where he stands before you, healthy and strong! Your own dear son! Your own dear, living, loving brother, Bertha!”

All honor to the little creature for her transports! All honor to her tears and laughter, when the three were locked in one another’s arms! All honor to the heartiness with which she met the sunburnt, sailor-fellow, with his dark, streaming hair, half-way, and

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never turned her rosy little mouth aside, but suffered him to kiss it freely, and to press her to his bounding heart!

"Now tell him (John) all, Edward," sobbed Dot, "and don't spare me, for nothing shall make me spare myself in his eyes ever again."

"I was the man," said Edward.

"And you could steal disguised into the home of your old friend," rejoined the Carrier . . .

"But I had a passion for her."

"You!"

"I had," rejoined the other, "and she returned it—I heard twenty miles away that she was false to me—I had no mind to reproach her, but to see for myself."

Once more Richard's voice faltered, and again it rang clear, this time in Dot's tones:

"But when she knew that Edward was alive, John, and had come back—and when she—that's me, John—told him all—and how his sweetheart had believed him to be dead, and how she had been over-persuaded by her mother into a marriage—and when she—that's me again, John—told him they were not married, though close upon it—and when he went nearly mad for joy to hear it—then she—that's me again—said she would go and sound his sweetheart—and she did—and they were married an hour ago!—John, an hour ago! And here's the bride! And Gruff and Tackleton may die a bachelor! And I'm a happy little woman, May, God bless you!"

Little woman, how she sobbed! John Perrybingle would have caught her in his arms. But no; she wouldn't let him.

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"Don't love me yet, please, John! Not for a long time yet! No—keep there, please, John! When I laugh at you, as I sometimes do, John, and call you clumsy, and a dear old goose, and names of that sort, it's because I love you, John, so well. And when I speak of people being middle-aged and steady, John, and pretend that we are a humdrum couple, going on in a jog-trot sort of way, it's only because I'm such a silly little thing, John, that I like, sometimes, to act a kind of play with Baby, and all that, and make believe."

She saw that he was coming, and stopped him again. But she was very nearly too late.

"No, don't love me for another minute or two, if you please, John! When I first came home here I was half afraid I mightn't learn to love you every bit as well as I hoped and prayed I might—being so very young, John. But, dear John, every day and hour I love you more and more. And if I could have loved you better than I do, the noble words I heard you say this morning would have made me. But I can't. All the affection that I had (it was a great deal, John) I gave you, as you well deserve, long, long ago, and I have no more left to give. Now, my dear husband, take me to your heart again! That's my home, John; and never, never think of sending me to any other."

Richard stopped and picking up a glass from the table moistened his lips. The silence continued. Down more than one face the tears were trickling, as they have trickled down millions of faces since. Kate had crept imperceptibly nearer until her hands could have touched Richard's

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knees. When Willits bent over her with a whispered comment a slight shiver ran through her, but she neither answered nor turned her head. It was only when Richard's voice finally ceased with the loud chirp of the cricket at the close of the beloved story, and St. George had helped her to her feet, that she seemed to awake to a sense of where she was. Even then she looked about her in a dazed way, as if she feared some one had been probing her heart—hanging back till the others had showered their congratulations on the reader. Then leaning forward she placed her hands in Richard's as if to steady herself, and with a sigh that seemed to come from the depths of her nature bent her head and kissed him softly on the cheek.

When the eggnog was being served and the guests were broken up into knots and groups, all discussing the beauty of the reading, she suddenly left Willits, who had followed her every move as if he had a prior right to her person, and going up to St. George, led him out of the room to one of the sofas in Richard's study, her lips quivering, the undried tears still trembling on her eyelids. She did not release his hand as they took their seats. Her fingers closed only the tighter, as if she feared he would slip from her grasp.

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"It was all so beautiful and so terrible, Uncle George," she moaned at last—"and all so true. Such awful mistakes are made and then it is too late. And nobody understands—nobody—nobody!" She paused, as if the mere utterance pained her, and then to St. George's amazement asked abruptly: "Is there nothing yet from Harry?"

St. George looked at her keenly, wondering whether he had caught the words aright. It had been months since Harry's name had crossed her lips.

"No, nothing," he answered simply, trying to fathom her purpose and completely at sea as to her real motive—"not for some months. Not since he left the ship."

"And do you think he is in any danger?" She had released his hand, and with her fingers resting on the sleeve of his coat sat looking into his eyes as if to read their meaning.

"I don't know," he replied in a non-committal tone, still trying to understand her purpose. "He meant then to go to the mountains, so he wrote his mother. This may account for our not hearing. Why do you ask? Have you had any news of him yourself?" he added, studying her face for some solution of her strange attitude.

She sank back on the cushions. "No, he

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never writes to me." Then, as if some new train of thought had forced its way into her mind, she exclaimed suddenly: "What mountains?"

"Some range back of Rio, if I remember rightly. He said he——"

"Rio! But there is yellow fever at Rio!" she cried, with a start as she sat erect in her seat, the pupils of her eyes grown to twice their size. "Father lost half of one of his crews at Rio. He heard so to-day. It would be dreadful for—for—his mother—if anything should happen to him."

Again St. George scrutinized her face, trying to probe deep down in her heart. Had she, after all, some affection left for this boy lover—and her future husband within hearing distance! No! This was not his Kate—he understood it all now. It was the spell of the story that still held her. Richard's voice had upset her, as it had done half the room.

"Yes, it is dreadful for everybody," he added. And then, in a perfunctory manner, as being perhaps the best way to lead the conversation into other channels, added: "And the suspense will be worse now—for me at any rate—for I, too, am going away where letters reach me but seldom."

Her hand closed convulsively over his.

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“You going away! *You!*” she cried in a half-frightened tone. “Oh, please don’t, Uncle George! Oh!—I don’t want you away from me! Why must you go? Oh, no! Not now—not now!”

Her distress was so marked and her voice so pleading that he was about to tell her the whole story, even to that of the shifts he had been put to to get food for himself and Todd, when he caught sight of Willits making his way through the throng to where they sat. His lips closed tight. This man would always be a barrier between him and the girl he had loved ever since her babyhood.

“Well, my dear Kate,” he replied calmly, his eyes still on Willits, who in approaching from the other room had been detained by a guest, “you see I *must* go. Mr. Pawson wants me out of the way while he fixes up some of my accounts, and so he suggested that I go back to Wesley for a few months.” He paused for an instant and, still keeping his eye on Willits, added: “And now one thing more, my dear Kate, before your escort claims you”—here his voice sank to a whisper—“promise me that if Harry writes to you you will send him a kind, friendly letter in return. It can do you no harm now, nor would Harry misunderstand it—your wedding is so

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near. A letter would greatly cheer him in his loneliness."

"But he won't write!" she exclaimed with some bitterness—she had not yet noticed Willits's approach—"he'll never write or speak to me again."

"But you will if he does?" pleaded St. George, the thought of his boy's loneliness overmastering every other feeling.

"But he won't, I tell you—never—*never!*"

"But if he should, my child? If——"

He stopped and raised his head. Willits stood gazing down at them, searching St. George's face, as if to learn the meaning of the conference: he knew that he did not favor his suit.

Kate looked up and her face flushed.

"Yes—in one minute, Mr. Willits," and without a word of any kind to St. George she rose from the sofa and with her arm in Willits's left the room.

CHAPTER XXIV

ONE winter evening some weeks after St. George's departure, Pawson sat before a smouldering fire in Temple's front room, reading by the light of a low lamp. He had rearranged the furniture—what was left of it—both in this and the adjoining room, in the expectation that Fogbin (Gorsuch's attorney) would move in, but so far he had not appeared, nor had any word come from either Gorsuch or Colonel Rutter; nor had any one either written or called upon him in regard to the overdue payment; neither had any legal papers been served.

This prolonged and ominous silence disturbed him; so much so that he had made it a point to be as much in his office as possible should his enemy spring any unexpected trap.

It was, therefore, with some misgivings that he answered a quick, impatient rap on his front door at the unusual hour of ten o'clock. If it were Fogbin he had everything ready for his comfort; if it were any one else he would meet him as best he could: no legal papers, at any rate, could be served at that hour.

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He swung back the door and a full-bearded, tightly-knit, well-built man in rough clothes stepped in. In the dim light of the overhead lamp he caught the flash of a pair of determined eyes set in a strong, forceful face.

"I want Mr. Temple," said the man, who had now removed his cap and stood looking about him, as if making an inventory of the scanty furniture.

"He is not here," replied Pawson, rummaging the intruder's face for some clew to his identity and purpose in calling at so late an hour.

"Are you sure?" There was doubt as well as marked surprise in the man's tone. He evidently did not believe a word of the statement.

"Very sure," rejoined the attorney in a more positive tone, his eyes still on the stranger. "He left town some weeks ago."

The intruder turned sharply, and with a brisk inquisitive movement strode past him and pushed open the dining-room door. There he stood for a moment, his eyes roaming over the meagre appointments of the interior—the sideboard, bare of everything but a pitcher and some tumbler—the old mahogany table littered with law books and papers—the mantel stripped of its clock and candelabras. Then he stepped inside, and without explanation of any kind, crossed the room,

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opened the door of St. George's bedroom, and swept a comprehensive glance around the despoiled interior. Once he stopped and peered into the gloom as if expecting to find the object of his search concealed in its shadows.

"What has happened here?" he demanded in a voice which plainly showed his disappointment.

"Do you mean what has become of the rest of the furniture?" asked the attorney in reply, gaining time to decide upon his course.

"Yes, who is responsible for this business?" he exclaimed angrily. "Has it been done during his absence?"

Pawson hesitated. That the intruder was one of Gorsuch's men, and that he had been sent in advance on an errand of investigation, was no longer to be doubted. He, however, did not want to add any fuel to his increasing heat, so he answered simply:

"Mr. Temple got caught in the Patapsco failure and it went pretty hard with him, and so what he didn't actually need he sold."

The man gave a start, his features hardening; but whether of surprise or dissatisfaction Pawson could not tell.

"And when it was all gone he went away—is that what you mean?" This came in a softened tone.

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“Yes—that seems to be the size of it. I suppose you come about—some”—again he hesitated, not knowing exactly where the man stood—“about some money due you?—Am I right?”

“No, I came to see Mr. Temple, and I must see him, and at once. How long will he be gone?”

“All winter—perhaps longer.” The attorney had begun to breathe again. The situation might not be as serious as he had supposed. If he wanted to see Mr. Temple himself, and no one else would do, there was still chance of delay in the wiping out of the property.

Again the man’s eyes roamed over the room, the bareness of which seemed still to impress him. Then he asked simply: “Where will a letter reach him?”

“I can’t say exactly. I thought he had gone to Virginia—but he doesn’t answer any of my communications.”

A look of suspicion crept into the intruder’s eyes.

“You’re not trying to deceive me, are you? It is very important that I should see Mr. Temple, and at once.” Then his manner altered. “You’ve forgotten me, Mr. Pawson, but I have not forgotten you—my name is Rutter. I lived here with Mr. Temple before I went to sea, three

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years ago. I am just home—I left the ship an hour ago. I'll sit down if you don't mind—I've still got my sea-legs on and am a little wobbly."

Pawson twisted his thin body and bent his neck, his eyes glued to the speaker's face. There was not a trace of young Harry in the features.

"Well, you don't look like him," he replied incredulously—"he was slender—not half your size, and——"

"Yes—I don't blame you. I am a good deal heavier; may be too a beard makes some change in a man's face. But you don't really doubt me, do you? Have you forgotten the bills that man Gadgem brought in?—the five hundred dollars due Slater, and the horse Hampson sold me—the one I shot?" and one of his old musical laughs rose to his lips.

Pawson sprang forward and seized the intruder's hand. He would recognize that laugh among a thousand:

"Yes—I know you now! It's all come back to me," he cried joyously. "But you gave me a terrible start, Mr. Rutter. I thought you had come to clear up what was left. Oh!—but I *am* glad you are back. Your uncle—you always called him so, I remember—your uncle has had an awful hard time of it—had to sell most of his

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things — terrible — terrible! And then, too, he has grieved so over you—asking me, sometimes two or three times a day, for letters from you—asking me questions and worrying over your not coming and not answering. Oh, this is fine. Now may be we can save the situation. You don't mind my shaking your hand again, do you? It's so good to know there is somebody who can help. I have been all alone so far except Gad-gem—who has been a treasure. You remember him. Why didn't you let Mr. Temple know you were coming?"

"I couldn't. I have been up in the mountains of Brazil, and coming home went ashore—got wrecked. These clothes I bought from a sailor," and he opened his rough jacket the wider.

"Yes—that's exactly what I heard him say—that's what he thought—that is, that you were where you couldn't write, although I never heard him say anything about shipwreck. I remember his telling Mr. Willits and Miss Seymour that same thing the morning he left—that you couldn't write. They came to see him off."

Harry edged his chair nearer the fireplace and propped one shoe on the fender as if to dry it, although the night was fair. The mention of Kate's and her suitor's names had sent the blood to his head and he was using the subterfuge in

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the effort to regain control of himself before Pawson should read all his secrets.

Shifting his body, he rested his head on his hand, the light of the lamp bringing into clearer relief his fresh, healthy skin, finely modelled nose, and wide brow, the brown hair, clipped close to his head, still holding its glossy sheen. For some seconds he did not speak: the low song of the fire seemed to absorb him. Now and then Pawson, who was watching him intently, heard him strangle a rebellious sigh, as if some old memory were troubling him. His hand dropped and with a quick movement he faced his companion again.

"I have been away a long time, Mr. Pawson," he said in a thoughtful tone. "For three months—four now—I have had no letters from anybody. It was my fault partly, but let that go. I want you to answer some questions, and I want you to tell me the truth—all the truth. I haven't any use for any other kind of man—do you understand? Is my mother alive?"

"Yes."

"And Alec? Is he all right?"

Pawson nodded.

"And my uncle? Is he ruined?—so badly ruined that he is suffering? Tell me." There was a peculiar pathos in his tone—so much so

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that Pawson, who had been standing, settled into a chair beside him that his answers might, if possible, be the more intimate and sympathetic.

"I'm afraid he is. The only hope is the postponement in some way of the foreclosure of the mortgage on this house until times get better. It wouldn't bring its face value to-day."

Harry caught his breath: "My God!—you don't tell me so! Poor Uncle George—so fine and splendid—so good to everybody, and he has come to this! And about this mortgage—who owns it?"

"Mr. Gorsuch, I understand, owns it now: he bought it of the Tyson estate."

"You mean John Gorsuch—my father's man of business?"

"Yes."

"And was there nothing left?—no money coming in from anywhere?"

Pawson shook his head: "We collected all that some time ago—it came from some old ground rents."

"And how has he lived since?" He wanted to hear it all; he could help better if he knew how far down the ladder to begin.

"From hand to mouth, really." And then there followed his own and Gadgem's efforts to keep the wolf from the door; the sale of the

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guns, saddles, and furniture; the wrench over the Castellux cup—and what a godsend it was that Kirk got such a good price for it—down to the parting with the last article that either or both of them could sell or pawn, including his four splendid setters.

As the sad story fell from the attorney's sympathetic lips Harry would now and then cover his face with his hands in the effort to hide the tears. He knew that the ruin was now complete. He knew, too, that he had been the cause of it. Then his thoughts reverted to the old régime and its comforts: those which his uncle had shared with him so generously.

"And what has become of my uncle's servants?" he asked—"his cook, Aunt Jemima, and his body-servant, Todd?"

"I don't know what has become of the cook, but he took Todd with him."

Harry heaved a sigh of relief. If Todd was with him life would still be made bearable for his uncle. Perhaps, after all, a winter with Tom Coston was the wisest thing he could have done.

One other question now trembled on his lips. It was one he felt he had no right to ask—not of Pawson—but it was his only opportunity, and he must know the truth if he was to carry out the other plans he had in view the day he

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dropped everything and came home without warning. At last he asked casually:

"Do you know whether my father returned to Uncle George the money he paid out for me?" Not that it was important—more as if he wanted to be posted on current events.

"He tried, but Mr. Temple wouldn't take it. I had the matter in hand, and know. This was some three years ago. He has never offered it since—not to my knowledge."

Harry's face lightened. Some trace of decency was still left in the Rutter blood! This money was in all honor owed by his father and might still become an asset if he and his uncle should ever become reconciled.

"And can you tell me how they ail are—out at Moorlands? Have you seen my father lately?"

"Not your father, but I met your old servant, Alec, a few days ago."

"Alec!—dear old Alec! Tell me about him. And my mother—was she all right? What did Alec say, and how did the old man look?"

"Yes; your mother was well. He said they were all well, except Colonel Rutter, whose eyes troubled him. Alec seemed pretty much the same—may be a little older."

Harry's mind began to wander. The room

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and his companion were forgotten. He was again at Moorlands, the old negro following him about, his dear mother sitting by his bed and kissing him good-night.

For an instant he sat gazing into the smouldering embers absorbed in his thoughts. Then, as if some new vista had opened out before him, he asked suddenly:

“You don’t know what he was doing in town, do you? Was my mother with him?”

“No, he was alone. He had brought some things in for Mr. Seymour—some game or something, if I remember right. There’s to be a wedding there soon, so I hear. Yes, now I think of it, it *was* game—some partridges, perhaps, your father had sent in. The old man asked about you—he always does. And now, Mr. Rutter, tell me about yourself—have you done well?” He didn’t think he had, judging from his general appearance, but he wanted to be sure in case St. George asked him.

Harry settled in his chair, his broad shoulders filling the back. The news of Kate’s wedding was what he had expected. Perhaps it was already over. He was glad, however, the information had come to him unsought. For an instant he made no reply to Pawson’s inquiry, then he answered slowly: “Yes, and no. I

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have made a little money—not much—but some—not enough to pay Uncle George everything I owe him—not yet; another time I shall do better. I was down with fever for a while and that cost me a good deal of what I had saved. But I *had* to come back. I met a man who told me Uncle George was ruined; that he had left this house and that somebody had put a sign on it. I thought at first that this must refer to you and your old arrangement in the basement, until I questioned him closer. I knew how careless he had always been about his money transactions, and was afraid some one had taken advantage of him. That's why I was so upset when I came in a while ago: I thought they had stolen his furniture as well. The ship *Mohican*—one of the old Barkeley line—was sailing the day I reached the coast and I got aboard and worked my passage home. I learned to do that on my way out. I learned to wear a beard too. Not very becoming, is it?"—and a low, forced laugh escaped his lips. "But shaving is not easy aboard ship or in the mines."

Pawson made no reply. He had been studying his guest the closer while he was talking, his mind more on the man than on what he was saying. The old Harry, which the dim light of the hall and room had hidden, was slowly com-

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ing back to him:—the quick turn of the head; the way his lips quivered when he laughed; the exquisitely modelled nose and brow, and the way the hair grew on the temples. The tones of his voice, too, had the old musical ring. It was the same madcap, daredevil boy mellowed and strengthened by contact with the outside world. Next he scrutinized his hands, their backs bronzed and roughened by contact with the weather, and waited eagerly until some gesture opened the delicately turned fingers, exposing the white palms, and felt relieved and glad when he saw that they showed no rough usage. His glance rested on his well-turned thighs, slender waist, and broad, strong shoulders and arms—and then his eyes—so clear, and his skin so smooth and fresh—a clean soul in a clean body! What joy would be Temple's when he got his arms around this young fellow once more!

The wanderer reached for his cap and pushed back his chair. For an instant he stood gazing into the smouldering coals as if he hated to leave their warmth, his brow clouded, his shoulders drawn back. He had all the information he wanted—all he had come in search of, although it was not exactly what he wished or what he had expected:—his uncle ruined and an exile;

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his father half blind and Kate's wedding expected any week. That was enough at least for one night.

He stepped forward and grasped Pawson's hand, his well-knit, alert body in contrast to the loosely jointed, long-legged young attorney.

"I must thank you, Mr. Pawson," he said in his old, outspoken, hearty way, "for your frankness, and I must also apologize for my apparent rudeness when I first entered your door; but, as I told you, I was so astounded and angry at what I saw that I hardly knew what I was doing. And now one thing more before I take my leave: if Mr. Temple does not want his present retreat known—and I gather from the mysterious way in which you have spoken that he does not—let me tell you that I do not want mine known either. Please do not say to any one that you have seen me, or answer any questions—not for a time, at least. Good-night!"

With the closing of the front door behind him the exile came to a standstill on the top step and looked about him. Across the park—beyond the trees, close sheltered under the wide protecting roof, lay Kate. All the weary miles out and back had this picture been fixed in his mind. She was doubtless asleep as it was now past eleven o'clock: he would know by the lights.

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But even the sight of the roof that sheltered her would, in itself, be a comfort. It had been many long years since he had breathed the same air with her; slept under the same stars; walked where her feet had trodden. For some seconds he stood undecided. Should he return to the Sailors' House where he had left his few belongings and banish all thoughts of her from his mind now that his worst fears had been confirmed? or should he yield to the strain on his heartstrings? If she were asleep, the whole house would be dark; if she were at some neighbor's and Mammy Henny was sitting up for her, the windows in the bedroom would be dark and the hall lamp still burning—he had watched it so often before and knew the signs.

Drawing the collar of his rough peajacket close about his throat and crowding his cap to his ears, he descended the steps and with one of his quick, decided movements plunged into the park, now silent and deserted.

As he neared the Seymour house he became conscious, from the glow of lights gleaming between the leafless branches of the trees, that something out of the common was going on inside. The house was ablaze from the basement to the roof, with every window-shade illumined. Outside the steps, and as far out as

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the curb, lounged groups of attendants, while in the side street, sheltered by the ghostly trees, there could be made out the wheels and hoods of carryalls and the glint of harness. Now and then the door would open and a bevy of muffled figures—the men in cloaks, the girls in nubias wound about their heads and shoulders—would pass out. The Seymours were evidently giving a ball, or was it—and the blood left his face and little chills ran loose through his hair—was it Kate's wedding night? Pawson had said that a marriage would soon take place, and in the immediate future. It was either this or an important function of some kind, and on a much more lavish scale than had been old Prim's custom in the days when he knew him. Then the contents of Alec's basket rose in his mind. That was why his father had sent the pheasants! Perhaps both he and his mother were inside!

Sick at heart, he turned on his heel and with quickened pace retraced his steps. He would not be a spy, and he could not be an eavesdropper. As the thought forced itself on his mind, the fear that he might meet some one whom he would know, or who would know him, overtook him. So great was his anxiety that it was only when he had left the park far behind him on his

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way back to the Sailors' House, that he regained his composure. He was prepared to face the truth, and all of it, whatever it held in store for him; but he must first confront his father and learn just how he stood with him; then he would see his mother and Alec, and then he would find St. George: Kate must come last.

The news that his father had offered to pay his debts—although he did not intend that that should relieve him in any way of his own responsibility to his uncle—kindled fresh hopes in his heart and buoyed him up. Now that his father had tried repeatedly to repair the wrong he had done it might only be necessary to throw himself on his knees before him and be taken back into his heart and arms. To see him, then, was his first duty and this he would begin to carry out in the morning. As to his meeting his mother and Alec—should he fail with his father—that must be undertaken with more care, for he could not place himself in the position of sneaking home and using the joy his return would bring them as a means to soften his father's heart. Yes, he would find his father first, then his mother and Alec. If his father received him the others would follow. If he was repulsed, he must seek out some other way.

This over he would find St. George. He

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knew exactly where his uncle was, although he had not said so to Pawson. He was not at Coston's, nor anywhere in the vicinity of Wesley, but at Craddock, on the bay—a small country house some miles distant, where he and his dogs had often spent days and weeks during the ducking season. St. George had settled down there to rest and get away from his troubles; that was why he had not answered Pawson's letters.

Striding along with his alert, springing step, he swung through the deserted and unguarded Marsh Market, picked his way between the piles of produce and market carts, and plunging down a narrow street leading to the wharf, halted before a door which swung a lantern burning a green light. Here he entered.

Although it was now near midnight, there were still eight or ten seafaring men in the room—several of them members of his own crew aboard the *Mohican*. Two were playing checkers, the others crowded about a square table where a game of cards was in progress; wavy lines of tobacco smoke floated beneath the dingy ceiling; at one end was a small bar where a man in a woollen shirt was filling some short, thick tumblers from an earthen jug. It was the ordinary sailors' retreat where the men put up before, between, and after their voyages.

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One of them at the card-table looked up from his game as Harry entered, and called out:

“Man been lookin’ for you—comin’ back, he says. My trick! Hearts, wasn’t it?” (this to his companions).

“Do I know him?” asked Harry with a slight start, pausing on his way to his bedroom upstairs, where he had left his bag of clothes two hours before. Could he have been recognized and shadowed?

“No—don’t think so; he’s a street vendor. Got some China silks to sell—carries his pack on his back and looks as if he’d took up a extry ’ole in his belt. Hungry, I wouldn’t wonder. Wanted to h’ist ’em fur a glass o’ grog an’ a night’s lodgin’, but Cap wouldn’t let him—said you’d be back and might help him. Wasn’t that it, Cap?”—this to the landlord, who nodded in reply.

“How could *I* help him?” asked Harry, selecting a tallow dip from a row on a shelf, but in a tone that implied his own doubt in the query, as well as his relief, now that the man was really a stranger.

“Well, this is your port, so I ’ear. Some o’ them high-flyers up ’round the park might lend a hand, may be, if you’d tip ’em a wink, or some o’ their women folks might take a shine to ’em.”

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“Looked hungry, did you say?” Harry asked, lighting the dip at an oil lamp that swung near the bar.

“Yes—holler’s a drum—see straight through him; tired too—beat out. You’d think so if you see him. My play—clubs.”

Harry turned to the landlord: “If this man comes in again give him food and lodging,” and he handed him a bank bill. “If he is here in the morning let me see him. I’m going to bed now. Good-night, men!”

CHAPTER XXV

SHOULD I lapse into the easy-flowing style of the chroniclers of the period of which I write—(and how often has the scribe wished he could)—this chapter would open with the announcement that on this particularly bleak, wintry afternoon a gentleman in the equestrian costume of the day, and mounted upon a well-groomed, high-spirited white horse, might have been seen galloping rapidly up a country lane leading to an old-fashioned manor house.

Such, however, would not cover the facts. While the afternoon was certainly wintry, and while the rider was unquestionably a gentleman, he was by no manner of means attired in velveteen coat and russet-leather boots with silver spurs, his saddle-bags strapped on behind, but in a rough and badly worn sailor's suit, his free hand grasping a bundle carried loose on his pommel. As to the horse, neither the immortal James nor any of his school could truthfully picture this animal as either white or high-spirited. He might, it is true, have been born white and would in all probability have stayed

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white but for the many omissions and commissions of his earlier livery stable training—traces of which could still be found in his scraped sides and gnawed mane and tail; he might also have once had a certain commendable spirit had not the ups and downs of road life—and they were pretty steep outside Kennedy Square—taken it out of him.

It is, however, when I come to the combination of horse and rider that I can with entire safety lapse into the flow of the old chroniclers. For whatever Harry had forgotten in his many experiences since he last threw his leg over Spitfire, horsemanship was not one of them. He still rode like a Cherokee and still sat his mount like a prince.

He had had an anxious and busy morning. With the first streak of dawn he had written a long letter to his Uncle George, in which he told him of his arrival; of his heart-felt sorrow at what Pawson had imparted, and of his leaving immediately, first for Wesley and then Craddock, as soon as he found out how the land lay at Moorlands. This epistle he was careful to enclose in another envelope, which he directed to Justice Coston, with instructions to forward it with "the least possible delay" to Mr. Temple, who was doubtless at Craddock, "and

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who was imperatively needed at home in connection with some matters which required his immediate personal attention," and which enclosure, it is just as well to state, the honorable justice placed inside the mantel clock, that being the safest place for such precious missives, at least until the right owner should appear.

This duly mailed, he had returned to the Sailors' House, knocked at the door of the upstairs room in which, through his generosity, the street vendor lay sleeping, and after waking him up and becoming assured that the man was in real distress, had bought at twice their value the China silks which had caused the disheartened pedler so many weary hours of tramping. These he had tucked under his arm and carried away.

The act was not alone due to his charitable instincts. A much more selfish motive influenced him. Indeed the thought came to him in a way that had determined him to attend to his mail at early dawn and return at sunrise lest the owner should disappear and take the bundle with him. The silks were the very things he needed to help him solve one of his greatest difficulties. He would try, as the sailor-pedler had done, to sell them in the neighborhood of Moorlands—(a common practice in those days)

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—and in this way might gather up the information of which he was in search. Pawson had not known him—perhaps the others would not: he might even offer the silks to his father without being detected.

With this plan clearly defined in his mind, he had walked into a livery stable near the market, but a short distance from his lodgings, with the silks in a bundle and, after looking the stock over, had picked out this unprepossessing beast as best able to take him to Moorlands and back between sunrise and dark.

As he rode on, leaving the scattered buildings of the town far behind, mounting the hills and then striking the turnpike—every rod of which he could have found in the dark—his thoughts, like road-swallows, skimmed each mile he covered. Here was where he had stopped with Kate when her stirrup broke; near the branches of that oak, close to the ditch marking the triangle of cross-roads, he had saved his own and Spitfire's neck by a clear jump that had been the talk of the neighborhood for days. On the crest of this hill—the one he was then ascending—his father always tightened up the brakes on his four-in-hand, and on the slope beyond invariably braced himself in his seat, swung his whip, and the flattened team swept on and

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down, leaving a cloud of dust in its wake that blurred the road for minutes thereafter.

When noon came he dismounted at a farmer's outbuilding beside the road—he would not trust the public-houses—fed and watered his horse, rubbed him down himself, and after an hour's rest pushed on toward the fork in the road to Moorlands. Beyond this was a cross-path that led to the outbarns and farm stables—a path bordered by thick bushes and which skirted a fence in the rear of the manor house itself. Here he intended to tie his steed and there he would mount him again should his mission fail.

The dull winter sky had already heralded the dusk—it was near four o'clock in the afternoon—when he passed some hayricks where a group of negroes were at work. One or two raised their heads and then, as if reassured, resumed their tasks. This encouraged him to push on the nearer—he had evidently been mistaken for one of the many tradespeople seeking his father's overseer, either to sell tools or buy produce.

Tying the horse close to the fence—so close that it could not be seen from the house—he threw the bundle of silks over his shoulder and struck out for the small office in the rear. Here the business of the estate was transacted,

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and here were almost always to be found either the overseer or one of his assistants—both of them white. These men were often changed, and his chance, therefore, of meeting a stranger was all the more likely.

As he approached the low sill of the door which was level with the ground, and which now stood wide open, he caught the glow of a fire and could make out the figure of a man seated at a desk bending over a mass of papers. The man pushed back a green shade which had protected his eyes from the glare of a lamp and peered out at him.

It was his father!

The discovery was so unexpected and had come with such suddenness—it was rarely in these later days that the colonel was to be found here in the afternoon: he was either riding or receiving visitors—that Harry's first thought was to shrink back out of sight, or, if discovered, to make some excuse for his intrusion and retire. Then his mind changed and he stepped boldly in. This was what he had come for and this was what he would face.

"I have some China silks to sell," he said in his natural tone of voice, turning his head so that while his goods were in sight his face would be in shadow.

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“Silks! I don’t want any silks! Who allowed you to pass in here? Alec!” He pushed back his chair and moved to the door. “Alec! Where the devil is Alec! He’s always where I don’t want him!”

“I saw no one to ask, sir,” Harry replied mechanically. His father’s appearance had sent a chill through him; he would hardly have known him had he met him on the street. Not only did he look ten years older, but the injury to his sight caused him to glance sideways at any one he addressed, completely destroying the old fearless look in his eyes.

“You never waited to ask! You walk into my private office unannounced and—” here he turned the lamp to see the better. “You are a sailor, aren’t you?” he added fiercely—a closer view of the intruder only heightening his wrath.

“Yes, sir—I’m a sailor,” replied Harry simply, his voice dying in his throat as he summed up the changes that the years had wrought in the colonel’s once handsome, determined face—thinner, more shrunken, his mustache and the short temple-whiskers almost white.

For an instant his father crumpled a wisp of paper he was holding between his fingers and thumb; and then demanded sharply, but with a tone of curiosity, as if willing the intruder

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should tarry a moment while he gathered the information:

"How long have you been a sailor?"

"I am just in from my last voyage." He still kept in the shadow although he saw his father had so far failed to recognize him. The silks had been laid on a chair beside him.

"That's not what I asked you. How long have you been a sailor?" He was scanning his face now as best he could, shifting the green shade that he might see the better.

"I went to sea three years ago."

"Three years, eh? Where did you go?"

The tone of curiosity had increased. Perhaps the next question would lead up to some basis on which he could either declare himself or lay the foundation of a declaration to be made the next day—after he had seen his mother and Alec.

"To South America. Para was my first port," he answered simply, wondering why he wanted to know.

"That's not far from Rio?" He was still looking sideways at him, but there was no wavering in his gaze.

"No, not far—Rio was our next stopping place. We had a hard voyage and put in to——"

"Do you know a young man by the name of

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Rutter—slim man with dark hair and eyes?" interrupted his father in an angry tone.

Harry started forward, his heart in his mouth, his hands upraised, his fingers opening. It was all he could do to restrain himself. "Don't you know me, father?" was trembling on his lips. Then something in the sound of the colonel's voice choked his utterance. Not now, he thought, mastering his emotion—a moment more and he would tell him.

"I have heard of him, sir," he answered when he recovered his speech, straining his ears to catch the next word.

"Heard of him, have you? So has everybody else heard of him—a worthless scoundrel who broke his mother's heart; a man who disgraced his family—a gentleman turned brigand—a renegade who has gone back on his blood! Tell him so if you see him! Tell him I said so; I'm his father, and know! No—I don't want your silks—don't want anything that has to do with sailormen. I am busy—please go away. Don't stop to bundle them up—do that outside," and he turned his back and readjusted the shade over his eyes.

Harry's heart sank, and a cold faintness stole through his frame. He was not angry nor indignant. He was stunned.

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Without a word in reply he gathered up the silks from the chair, tucked them under his arm, and replacing his cap stepped outside into the fast approaching twilight. Whatever the morrow might bring forth, nothing more could be done to-day. To have thrown himself at his father's feet would only have resulted in his being driven from the grounds by the overseer, with the servants looking on—a humiliation he could not stand.

As he stood rolling the fabrics into a smaller compass, a gray-haired negro in the livery of a house servant passed hurriedly and entered the door of the office. Instantly his father's voice rang out:

"Where the devil have you been, Alec? How many times must I tell you to look after me oftener. Don't you know I'm half blind and—No—I don't want any more wood—I want these vagabonds kept off my grounds. Send Mr. Grant to me at once, and don't you lose sight of that man until you have seen him to the main road. He says he is a sailor—and I've had enough of sailors, and so has everybody else about here."

The negro bowed and backed out of the room. No answer of any kind was best when the colonel was in one of his "tantrums."

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"I reckon I hab to ask ye, sah, to quit de place—de colonel don't 'low nobody to—" he said politely.

Harry turned his face aside and started for the fence. His first thought was to drop his bundle and throw his arms around Alec's neck; then he realized that this would be worse than his declaring himself to his father—he could then be accused of attempting deception by the trick of a disguise. So he hurried on to where his horse was tied—his back to Alec, the bundle shifted to his left shoulder that he might hide his face the better until he was out of sight of the office, the old man stumbling on, calling after him:

"No, dat ain't de way. Yer gotter go down de main road; here, man—don't I tell yer dat ain't de way."

Harry had now gained the fence and had already begun to loosen the reins when Alec, out of breath and highly indignant over the refusal to carry out his warning, reached his side.

"You better come right back f'om whar ye started," the old negro puffed; "ye can't go dat way or dey'll set the dogs on ye." Here his eyes rested on the reins and forelock. "What! you got a horse an' you——"

Harry turned and laid his hand on the old

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servant's shoulder. He could hardly control his voice:

"Don't you know me, Alec? I'm Harry!"

The old man bent down, peered into Harry's eyes, and with a quick spring forward grabbed him by both shoulders.

"You my Marse Harry!—you!" His breath was gone now, his whole body in a tremble, his eyes bulging from his head.

"Yes, Alec, Harry! It's only the beard. Look at me! I didn't want my father to see us—that's why I kept on."

The old servant threw up his hands and caught his young master around the neck. For some seconds he could not speak.

"And de colonel druv ye out!" he gasped. "Oh, my Gawd! my Gawd! And ye ain't daid, and ye come back home ag'in." He was sobbing now, his head on the exile's shoulder, Harry's arms about him—patting his bent back. "But yer gotter go back, Marse Harry," he moaned. "He ain't 'sponsible these days. He didn't know ye! Come 'long, son; come back wid ol' Alec; please come, Marse Harry. Oh, Gawd! ye *gottter* come!"

"No, I'll go home to-night—another day I'll —"

"Ye ain't got no home but dis, I tell ye!

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Go tell him who ye is—lemme run tell him. I won't be a minute. Oh! Marse Harry, I can't let ye go! I been dat mizzable widout ye. I ain't neber got over lovin' ye!"

Here a voice from near the office broke out. In the dusk the two could just make out the form of the colonel, who was evidently calling to some of his people. He was bareheaded and without his shade.

"I've sent Alec to see him safe off the grounds. You go yourself, Mr. Grant, and follow him into the highroad; remember that after this I hold you responsible for these prowlers."

The two had paused while the colonel was speaking, Harry, gathering the reins in his hand, ready to vault into the saddle, and Alec, holding on to his coat-sleeves, hoping still to detain him.

"I haven't a minute more—quick, Alec, tell me how my mother is."

"She's middlin' po'ly, same's ever; got great rings under her eyes and her heart's dat heaby makes abody cry ter look at 'er. But she ain't sick, jes' griebin' herse'f to death. Ain't yer gwineter stop and see 'er? May be I kin git ye in de back way."

"Not now—not here. Bring her to Uncle George's house to-morrow about noon, and I will be there. Tell her how I look, but don't

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tell her what my father has done. And now tell me about Miss Kate—how long since you saw her? Is she married?"

Again the colonel's voice was heard; this time much nearer—within hailing distance. He and the overseer were evidently approaching the fence; some of the negroes had doubtless apprised them of the course of Harry's exit.

Alec turned quickly to face his master, and Harry, realizing that his last moment had come, swung himself into the saddle. If Alec made any reply to his question it was lost in the clatter of hoofs as both horse and man swept down the by-path. In another moment they had gained the main road, the rider never breaking rein until he had reached the farm-house where he had fed and watered his horse some hours before.

Thirty-odd miles out and back was not a long ride for a hired horse in these days over a good turnpike with plenty of time for resting—and he had as many breathing spells as gallops, for Harry's moods really directed his gait. Once in a while he would give him his head, the reins lying loose, the horse picking his way in a walk. Then the bitterness of his father's words and how undeserved they were, and how the house

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of cards his hopes had built up had come tumbling down about his ears at the first point of contact, would rush over him, and he would dig his heels into the horse's flanks and send him at full gallop through the night along the pale ribbon of a road barely discernible in the ghostly dark. When, however, Alec's sobs smote his ear, or the white face of his mother confronted him, the animal would gradually slacken his pace and drop into a walk.

Dominated by these emotions, certain fixed resolutions at last took possession of him: He would see his mother at once, no matter at what cost—even if he defied his father—and then he would find his uncle. Whether he would board the next vessel leaving port and return to his work in the mountains, or whether he would bring his uncle back from Craddock and the two, with his own vigorous youth and new experience of the world, fight it out together as they had once done before, depended on what St. George advised. Now that Kate's marriage was practically decided upon, one sorrow—and his greatest—was settled forever. Any others that were in store for him he would meet as they came.

With his mind still intent on these plans he rode at last into the open door of the small

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courtyard of the livery stable and drew rein under a swinging lantern. It was past ten at night, and the place was deserted, except by a young negro who advanced to take his horse. Tossing the bridle aside, he slipped to the ground.

"He's wet," Harry said, "but he's all right. Let him cool off gradually, and don't give him any water until he gets dry. I'll come in tomorrow and pay your people what I owe them."

The negro curry-combed his fingers down the horse's flanks as if to assure himself of his condition, and in the movement brought his face under the glare of the overhead light.

Harry grabbed him by the shoulder and swung him round.

"Todd—you rascal! What are you doing here? Why are you not down on the Eastern Shore?" His astonishment was so intense that for an instant he could not realize he had the right man.

The negro drew back. He was no runaway slave, and he didn't intend to be taken for one—certainly not by a man as rough and suspicious looking as the one before him.

"How you know my name, man?" He was nervous and scared half out of his wits. More than one negro had been shanghaied in that way and smuggled off to sea.

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“Know you! I’d know you among a thousand. Have you, too, deserted your master?” He still held him firmly by the collar of his coat, his voice rising with his wrath. “Why have you left him? Answer me.”

For an instant the negro hesitated, leaned forward, and then with a burst of joy cried out:

“You ain’t!—Fo’ Gawd it is! Dat beard on ye, Marse Harry, done fool me—but you is him fo’ sho. Gor-a-mighty! ain’t I glad ye ain’t daid. Marse George say on’y yisterday you was either daid or sick dat ye didn’t write an’——”

“Said yesterday! Why, is he at home?”

“*Home!* Lemme throw a blanket over dis hoss and tie him tell we come back. Oh, we had a heap o’ mis’ry since ye went away—a heap o’ trouble. Nothin’ but trouble! You come ’long wid me—’tain’t far; des around de corner. I’ll show ye sompin’ make ye creep all over. An’ it ain’t gettin’ no better—gettin’ wuss. Dis way, Marse Harry. You been ’cross de big water, ain’t ye? That’s what I heard. Aunt Jemima been mighty good, but we can’t go on dis way much longer.”

Still talking, forging ahead in the darkness through the narrow street choked with horseless drays, Todd swung into a dingy yard, mounted

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a flight of rickety wooden steps, and halted at an unpainted door. Turning the knob softly, he beckoned silently to Harry, and the two stepped into a small room lighted by a low lamp placed on the hearth, its rays falling on a cot bed and a few chairs. Beside a cheap pine table sat Aunt Jemima, rocking noiselessly. The old woman raised her hand in warning and put her fingers to her lips.

On the bed, with the coverlet drawn close under his chin, lay his Uncle George!

CHAPTER XXVI

HARRY looked about the room in a bewildered way and then tiptoed to St. George's bed. It had been a day of surprises, but this last had completely upset him. St. George dependent on the charity of his old cook and without other attendant than Todd! Why had he been deserted by everybody who loved him? Why was he not at Wesley or Craddock? Why should he be here of all places in the world?

All these thoughts surged through his mind as he stood above the patient and watched his slow, labored breathing. That he had been ill for some time was evident in his emaciated face and the deep hollows into which his closed eyes were sunken.

Aunt Jemima rose and handed the intruder her chair. He sat down noiselessly beside him. Once his uncle coughed, and in the effort drew the coverlet close about his throat, his eyes still shut; but whether from weakness or drowsiness, Harry could not tell. Presently he shifted his body and, moving his head on the pillow, called softly: "Jemima?"

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The old woman bent over him.

“Yes, Marse George.”

“Give me a little milk—my throat troubles me.”

Harry drew back into the shadow cast over one end of the cot and rear wall by the low lamp on the hearth. Whether to slip his hand gently over his uncle's and declare himself, or whether to wait until he dozed again and return in the morning, when he would be less tired and could better withstand the shock of the meeting, was the question which disturbed him. And yet he could not leave until he satisfied himself of just what ought to be done. If he left him at all it must be for help of some kind. He leaned over and whispered in Jemima's ear:

“Has he had a doctor?”

Jemima shook her head. “He wouldn't hab none; he ain't been clean beat out till day befo' yisterday, and then I got skeered an'—” She stopped, leaned closer, clapped her hand over her mouth to keep from screaming, and staggered back to her chair.

St. George raised his head from the pillow and stared into the shadows.

“Who is talking? I heard somebody speak? Jemima—you haven't disobeyed me, have you?”

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Harry stepped noiselessly to the bedside and laid his fingers on the sick man's wrist:

"Uncle George," he said gently.

Temple lowered his head as if to focus his gaze.

"Yes, there is some one!" he cried in a stronger voice. "Who are you, sir?—not a doctor, are you? I didn't send for you!—I don't want any doctor, I told my servant so. Jemima!—Todd!—Why do you——"

Harry tightened his grasp on the emaciated wrist. "No, Uncle George, it's Harry! I'm just back."

"What did he say, Todd? Harry!—Harry! Did he say he was Harry, or am I losing my mind?"

In his eagerness to understand he lifted himself to a sitting posture, his eyes wandering uneasily over the speaker's body, resting on his head—on his shoulders, arms, and hands—as if trying to fix his mind on something which constantly baffled him.

Harry continued to pat his wrist soothingly.

"Yes, it's Harry, Uncle George," he answered. "But don't talk—lie down. I'm all right—I got in yesterday and have been looking for you everywhere. Pawson told me you were at Wesley. I found Todd a few minutes ago

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by the merest accident, and he brought me here. No, you must lie down—let me help—rest yourself on me—so.” He was as tender with him as if he had been his own mother.

The sick man shook himself free—he was stronger than Harry thought. He was convinced now that there was some trick being played upon him—one Jemima in her anxiety had devised.

“How dare you, sir, lie to me like that! Who asked you to come here? Todd—send this fellow from the room!”

Harry drew back out of his uncle’s vision and carefully watched the invalid. St. George’s mind was evidently unhinged and it would be better not to thwart him.

Todd crept up. He had seen his master like this once before and had had all he could do to keep him in bed.

“Dat ain’t no doctor, Marse George,” he pleaded, his voice trembling. “Dat’s Marse Harry come back agin alive. It’s de hair on his face make him look dat way; dat fool me too. It’s Marse Harry, fo’ sho’—I fotch him yere myse’f. He’s jes’ come from de big ship.”

St. George twisted his head, looked long and earnestly into Harry’s face, and with a sudden cry of joy stretched out his hand and motioned him nearer. Harry sank to his knees beside the

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bed. St. George curved one arm about his neck, drew him tightly to his breast as he would a woman, and fell back upon the pillow with Harry's head next his own. There the two lay still, St. George's eyes half closed, thick sobs stifling his utterance, the tears streaming down his pale cheeks; his thin white fingers caressing the brown hair of the boy he loved. At last, with a heavy, indrawn sigh, not of grief, but of joy, he muttered:

"It's true, isn't it, my son?"

Harry hugged him the tighter in answer.

"And you are home for good?"

Again the pressure. "Yes, but don't talk, you must go to sleep. I won't leave you." His own tears were choking him now.

Then, after a long pause, releasing his grasp: "I did not know how weak I was. . . . Maybe I had better not talk. . . . Don't stay. Come to-morrow and tell me about it. . . . There is no bed for you here . . . I am sorry . . . but you must go away—you couldn't be comfortable. . . . Todd——"

The darky started forward—both he and Aunt Jemima were crying:

"Yes, Marse George."

"Take the lamp and light Mr. Rutter downstairs. To-morrow—to-morrow, Harry. . . .



WITH A SUDDEN CRY OF JOY STRETCHED OUT HIS HAND AND
MOTIONED HIM NEARER

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My God—think of it!—Harry home! Harry home! My Harry home!” and he turned his face to the wall.

On the way back—first to the stable, where he found that the horse had been properly cared for and his bill ready and then to his lodgings,—Todd told him the story of what had happened: At first his master had firmly intended going to the Eastern Shore—and for a long stay—for he had ordered his own and Todd’s trunks packed with everything they both owned in the way of clothes. On the next day, however—the day before the boat left—Mr. Temple had made a visit to Jemima to bid her good-by, where he learned that her white lodger had decamped between suns, leaving two months board unpaid. In the effort to find this man, or compel his employer to pay his bill, out of some wages still due him—in both of which he failed—his master had missed the boat and they were obliged to wait another week. During this interim, not wishing to return to Pawson, and being as he said very comfortable where he was with his two servants to wait upon him, and the place as clean as a pin—his master had moved his own and Todd’s trunk from the steamboat warehouse where they had been stored and had had them brought to Jemima’s. Two days later—whether

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from exposure in tramping the streets in his efforts to collect the old woman's bill, or whether the change of lodgings had affected him—he was taken down with a chill and had been in bed ever since. With this situation staring both Jemima and himself in the face—for neither she nor Mr. Temple had much money left—Todd had appealed to Gadgem—(he being the only man in his experience who could always produce a roll of bills when everybody else failed)—who took him to the stableman whose accounts he collected—and who had once bought one of St. George's saddles—and who then and there hired Todd as night attendant. His wages, added to what Jemima could earn over her tubs, had kept the three alive. All this had taken place four weeks or more ago.

None of all this, he assured Harry, had he told Gadgem or anybody else, his master's positive directions being to keep his abode and his condition a secret from everybody. All the collector knew was that Mr. Temple, being too poor to take Todd with him, had left him behind to shift for himself until he could send for him. All the neighborhood knew, to quote Todd's own hilarious chuckle, was that "Miss Jemima Johnsing had two mo' boa'ders; one a sick man dat had los' his job an' de udder a yaller nigger

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who sot up nights watchin' de hosses eat dere haid off."

Since that time his master had had various ups and downs, but although he was still weak he was very much stronger than he had been any time since he had taken to his bed. Only once had he been delirious; then he talked ramblingly about Miss Kate and Marse Harry. This had so scared Aunt Jemima that she had determined to go to Mammy Henny and have her tell Miss Kate, so he could get a doctor—something he had positively forbidden her to do, but he grew so much better the next day that she had given it up; since that time his mind had not again given way. All he wanted now, so Todd concluded, was a good soup and "a drap o' sumpin warmin'—an' he'd pull thru'. But dere warn't no use tryin' ter git him to take it 'cause all he would eat was taters an' corn pone an' milk—an' sich like, 'cause he said dere warn't money 'nough fer de three—" whereupon Todd turned his head away and caught his breath, and then tried to pass it off as an unbidden choke—none of which subterfuges deceived Harry in the least.

When the two arrived off the dimly burning lantern—it was past ten o'clock—and pushed in the door of the Sailors' House, Todd received

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another shock—one that sent his eyes bulging from his head. That Marse Harry Rutter, who was always a law unto himself, should grow a beard and wear rough clothes, was to be expected—"Dem Rutters was allus dat way—do jes's dey mineter—" but that the most elegant young man of his day "ob de fustest quality," should take up his quarters in a low sailors' retreat, and be looked upon by the men gathered under the swinging lamp around a card table—(some of whom greeted Harry familiarly)—as one of their own kind, completely staggered him.

The pedler was particularly gracious—so much so that when he learned that Harry was leaving for good, and had come to get his belongings—he jumped up and insisted on helping—at which Harry laughed and assented, and as a further mark of his appreciation presented him with the now useless silks, in addition to the money he gave him—an act of generosity which formed the sole topic of conversation in the resort for weeks thereafter.

Board and lodging paid, the procession took up its return march: Harry in front, Todd, still dazed and still at sea as to the meaning of it all, following behind; the pedler between with Harry's heavy coat, blankets, etc.—all purchased

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since his shipwreck—the party threading the choked-up street until they reached the dingy yard, where the pedler dumped his pack and withdrew, while the darky stowed his load in the basement. This done, the two tiptoed once more up the stairs to where Aunt Jemima awaited them, St. George having fallen asleep.

Beckoning the old woman away from the bedroom door and into the far corner of the small hall, Harry unfolded to her as much of his plans for the next day as he thought she ought to know. Early in the morning—before his uncle was astir—he would betake himself to Kennedy Square; ascertain from Pawson whether his uncle's rooms were still unoccupied, and if such were the case—and St. George be unable to walk—would pick him up bodily, wrap him in blankets, carry him in his own arms downstairs, place him in a carriage, and drive him to his former home where he would again pick him up and lay him in his own bed: This would be better than a hundred doctors—he had tried it himself when he was down with fever and knew. Aunt Jemima was to go ahead and see that these preparations were carried out. Should Alec be able to bring his mother to Kennedy Square in the morning, as he had instructed him to do, then there would indeed be somebody on hand

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who could nurse him even better than Jemima; should his mother not be there, Jemima would take her place. Nothing of all this, he charged her, was to be told St. George until the hour of departure. To dwell upon the intended move might overexcite him. Then, when everything was ready—his linen, etc., arranged—(Jemima was also to look after this)—he would whisk him off and make him comfortable in his own bed. He would, of course, now that his uncle wished it, keep secret his retreat; although why St. George Wilmot Temple, Esq., or any other gentleman of his standing, should object to being taken care of by his own servants was a thing he could not understand: Pawson, of course, need not know—nor should any outside person—not even Gadgem if he came nosing around. To these he would merely say that Mr. Temple had seen fit to leave home and that Mr. Temple had seen fit to return again: that was quite enough for attorneys and collectors. To all the others he would keep his counsel, until St. George himself made confession, which he was pretty sure he would do at the first opportunity.

This decided upon, he bade Jemima good-night, gave her explicit directions to call him, should his uncle awake (her own room opened

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out on St. George's) spread his blanket in the cramped hall outside the sick man's door—he had not roughed it on shipboard and in the wilderness all these years without knowing something of the soft side of a plank—and throwing his heavy ship's coat over him fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XXVII

WHEN the first glimmer of the gray dawn stole through the small window at the end of the narrow hall, and laid its chilled fingers on Harry's upturned face, it found him still asleep. His ride to Moorlands and back—his muscles unused for months to the exercise—had tired him. The trials of the day, too, those with his father and his Uncle George, had tired him the more—and so he had slept on as a child sleeps—as a perfectly healthy man sleeps—both mind and body drinking in the ozone of a new courage and a new hope.

With the first ray of the joyous sun riding full tilt across his face, he opened his eyes, threw off the cloak, and sprang to his feet. For an instant he looked wonderingly about as if in doubt whether to call the watch or begin the hunt for his cattle. Then the pine door caught his eye and the low, measured breathing of his uncle fell upon his ear, and with a quick lift of his arms, his strong hands thumping his broad chest, he stretched himself to his full height: he had work to do, and he must begin at once.

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Aunt Jemima was already at her duties. She had tiptoed past his sleeping body an hour before, and after listening to St. George's breathing had plunged into her tubs; the cat's cradle in the dingy court-yard being already gay with various colored fragments, including Harry's red flannel shirts which Todd had found in a paper parcel, and which the old woman had pounced upon at sight. She insisted on making him a cup of coffee, but he had no time for such luxuries. He would keep on, he said, to Kennedy Square, find Pawson, ascertain if St. George's old rooms were still unoccupied; notify him of Mr. Temple's return; have his bed made and fires properly lighted; stop at the livery stable, wake up Todd, if that darky had overslept himself—quite natural when he had been up almost all night—engage a carriage to be at Jemima's at four o'clock, and then return to get everything ready for the picking-up-and-carrying-downstairs process.

And all this he did do; and all this he told Jemima he had done when he swung into the court-yard an hour later, a spring to his heels and a cheery note in his voice that had not been his for years. The reaction that hope brings to youth had set in. He was alive and at home; his Uncle George was where he could get his

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hands on him—in a minute—by the mounting of the stairs; and Alec and his mother within reach!

And the same glad song was in his heart when he opened his uncle's door after he had swallowed his coffee—Jemima had it ready for him this time—and thrusting in his head cried out:

“We are going to get you out of here, Uncle George!” This with a laugh—one of his old contagious laughs that was music in the sick man's ears.

“When?” asked the invalid, his face radiant. He had been awake an hour wondering what it all meant. He had even thought of calling to Jemima to reassure himself that it was not a dream, until he heard her over her tubs and refrained from disturbing her.

“Oh, pretty soon! I have just come from Pawson's. Fogbin hasn't put in an appearance and there's nobody in the rooms and hasn't been anybody there since you left. He can't understand it, nor can I—and I don't want to. I have ordered the bed made and a fire started in both the chamber and the old dining-room, and if anybody objects he has got to say so to me, and I am a very uncomfortable person to say some kinds of things to nowadays. So up

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you get when the time comes; and Todd and Jemima are to go too. I've got money enough, anyhow, to begin on. Aunt Jemima says you had a good night and it won't be long now before you are yourself again."

The radiant smile on the sick man's face blossomed into a laugh: "Yes—the best night that I have had since I was taken ill, and— Where did you sleep, my son?"

"Me!— Oh, I had a fine time—long, well-ventilated room with two windows and a private staircase; nice pine bedstead—very comfortable place for this part of the town."

St. George looked at him and his eyes filled. His mind was neither on his own questions nor on Harry's answers.

"Get a chair, Harry, and sit by me so I can look at you closer. How fine and strong you are, my son—not like your father—you're like your mother. And you've broadened out—mentally as well as physically. Pretty hard, I tell you, to spoil a gentleman—more difficult still to spoil a Rutter. But you must get that beard off—it isn't becoming to you, and then somebody might think you disguised yourself on purpose. I didn't know you at first, neither did Jemima--and you don't want anybody else to make that kind of a mistake."

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“My father did, yesterday—” Harry rejoined quietly, dropping into Jemima’s chair.

St. George half raised himself from his bed: “You have seen him?”

“Yes—and I wish I hadn’t. But I hunted everywhere for you and then got a horse and rode out home. He didn’t know me—that is, I’m pretty sure he didn’t—but he cursed me all the same. My mother and old Alec, I hope, will come in to-day—but father’s chapter is closed forever. I have been a fool to hope for anything else.”

“Drove you out! Oh, no—*no!* Harry! Impossible!”

“But he did—” and then followed an account of all the wanderer had passed through from the time he had set foot on shore to the moment of meeting Todd and himself.

For some minutes St. George lay staring at the ceiling. It was all a horrid nightmare to him. Talbot deserved nothing but contempt and he would get it so far as he was concerned. He agreed with Harry that all reconciliation was now a thing of the past; the only solution possible was that Talbot was out of his senses—the affair having undermined his reason. He had heard of such cases and had doubted them—he was convinced now that they could be true.

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His answer, therefore, to Harry's next question—one about his lost sweetheart—was given with a certain hesitation. As long as the memory of Rutter's curses rankled with him all reference to Kate's affairs—even the little he knew himself—must be made with some circumspection. There was no hope in that direction either, but he did not want to tell him so outright; nor did he want to dwell too long upon the subject.

“And I suppose Kate is married by this time, Uncle George,” Harry said at last in a casual tone, “is she not?” (He had been leading up to it rather skilfully, but there had been no doubt in his uncle's mind as to his intention.) “I saw the house lighted up, night before last, when I passed, and a lot of people about, so I thought it might be either the wedding or the reception.” The question had left his lips as one shoots an arrow in the dark—hit or miss—as if he did not care which. He, too, realized that this was no time to open wounds, certainly not in his uncle's heart; and yet he could wait no longer.

“No—I don't think the wedding has taken place,” St. George replied vaguely. “The servants would know if it had—they know everything—and Aunt Jemima would be the first to

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have told me. The house being lighted up is no evidence. They have been giving a series of entertainments this winter and there were more to come when I last saw Kate, which was one night at Richard Horn's. But let us close that chapter too, my boy. You and I will take a new lease of life from now on. You have already put fresh blood into my veins—I haven't felt so well for weeks. Now tell me about yourself. Your last letter reached me six months ago, if I remember right. You were then in Rio and were going up into the mountains. Did you go?"

"Yes—up into the Rio Abaste country where they had discovered diamonds as big as hens' eggs—one had been sold for nearly a quarter of a million dollars—and everybody was crazy. I didn't find any diamonds nor anything else but starvation, so I herded cattle, that being the only thing I knew anything about—how to ride—and slept out on the lowlands sometimes under a native mat and sometimes under the kindly stars. Then we had a revolution and cattle raids, and one night I came pretty near being chewed up by a puma—and so it went. I made a little money in rawhides after I got to know the natives, and I'm going back to make some more; and you are going with me when we get things straightened

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out. I wouldn't have come home except that I heard you had been turned out, neck and crop, from Kennedy Square. One of Mr. Seymour's clerks stopped in Rio on his way to the River Plate and did some business with an English agent whom I met afterward at a hacienda, and he told me about you when he learned I was from Kennedy Square. And when I think of it all, Uncle George, and what you have suffered on account of me!"—Here his voice faltered. "No! —I won't talk about it—I can't. I have spent too many sleepless nights over it: I have been hungry and half dead, but I have kept on—and I am not through: I'll pull out yet and put you on your feet once more if I live!"

St. George laid his hand tenderly on the young man's wrist. He knew how the boy felt about it. That was one of the things he loved him for.

"And so you started home when you heard it," he went on, clearing his throat. "That was just like you, you dear fellow! And you haven't come home an hour too soon. I should have been measured for a pine coffin in another week." The choke was quite in evidence now. "You see, I really couldn't go to Coston's when I thought it all over. I had made up my mind to go for a week or so until I saw this place, and

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then I determined I would stop with Jemima. I could eke out an existence here on what I had left and still feel like a gentleman, but I couldn't settle down on dear Peggy Coston and be anything but a poltroon. As to my making a living at the law—that was pure moonshine. I haven't opened a law book for twenty years and now it's too late. People of our class"—here he looked away from his companion and talked straight at the foot of the bed—"People of our class, my boy," he repeated slowly—"when they reach the neck and crop period you spoke of, are at the end of their rope. There are then but two things left—either to become the inmate of a poorhouse or to become a sponge. I prefer this bare room as a happy medium, and I am content to stay where I am as long as we three can keep body and soul together. There is—so Pawson told me before I left my house—a little money coming in from a ground rent—a few months off, perhaps, but more than enough to pay Todd back—he gives Jemima every cent of his wages—and when this does come in and I can get out once more, I'm going to order my life so I can make a respectable showing of some kind."

He paused for a moment, fastened his gaze again on Harry, and continued :

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“As to my going back to Pawson’s, I am not altogether sure that that is the wisest thing to do. I may have to leave again as soon as I get comfortably settled in my bed. I turned out at his bidding before and may have to turn again when he says the word. So don’t kindle too many fires with Pawson’s wood—I hadn’t a log to my name when I left—or it may warm somebody else’s shins besides mine,” and a merry twinkle shone in his eyes.

Harry burst out laughing.

“Wood or no wood, Uncle George, I’m going to be landlord now—Pawson can move out and graze his cattle somewhere else. I’m going to take charge of the hut and stock and the pack-mules and provisions—and with a gun, if necessary—” and he levelled an imaginary fowling-piece with a boyish gesture.

“Don’t you try to move anybody without an order of the court!” cried St. George, joining in the merriment. (“What a boy he is!” he thought to himself.) “With that mortgage hanging over everything and Gorsuch and your father cudgelling their brains to foreclose it, you won’t have a ghost of a chance. Come to think of it, however, I might help—for a few weeks’ expenses, at least. How would this do?” Here he had all he could do to straighten his face:

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“‘Attention now—Hats off in the court-room. For sale or hire! Immediate delivery. One first-class gentleman, in reasonable repair. Could be made useful in opening and shutting doors, or in dancing attendance upon children under one year of age, or in keeping flies from bedridden folk. Apply, and so forth,’ Gadgem could fix it. He has done the most marvellous things in the last year or two—extraordinary, really! Ask Todd about it some time—he’ll tell you.”

They were both roaring with laughter, St. George so buoyed up by the contagious spirit of the young fellow that he insisted on getting out of bed and sitting in Aunt Jemima’s rocking chair with a blanket across his knees.

All the morning did this happy talk go on:—the joyous, unconfined talk of two men who had hungered and thirsted for each other through weary, bitter days and nights, and whose coming together was like the mingling of two streams long kept apart, and now one great river flowing to a common outlet and a common good.

And not only did their talk cover the whole range of Harry’s experiences from the time he left the ship for his sojourn in the hill country and the mountains beyond, and all of St. George’s haps and mishaps, with every single transaction of Gadgem and Pawson—loving cup, dogs and

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all—but when their own personal news was exhausted they both fell back on their friends, such as Richard Horn and old Judge Pancoast; when he had seen Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Latrobe—yes, and what of Mr. Poe—had he written any more?—and were his habits any better?—etc., etc.

“I have seen Mr. Poe several times since that unfortunate dinner, Harry; the last time when he was good enough to call upon me on his way to Richmond. He was then particularly himself. You would not have known him—grave, dignified, perfectly dressed—charming, delightful. He came in quite late—indeed I was going to bed when I heard his knock and, Todd being out, I opened the door myself. There was some of that Black Warrior left, and I brought out the decanter, but he shook his head courteously and continued his talk. He asked after you. Wonderful man, Harry—a man you never forget once you know him.”

St. George dragged the pine table nearer his chair and moistened his lips with the glass of milk which Jemima had set beside him. Then he went on:

“You remember Judge Giles, do you not? Lives here on St. Paul Street—yes—of course you do—for he is a great friend of your father’s

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and you must have met him repeatedly at Moorlands. Well, one day at the club he told me the most extraordinary story about Mr. Poe—this was some time after you'd gone. It seems that the judge was at work in his study late one snowy night when his doorbell sounded. Outside stood a man with his coat buttoned close about his throat—evidently a gentleman—who asked him politely for a sheet of paper and a pen. You know the judge, and how kind and considerate he is. Well, of course he asked him in, drew out a chair at his desk and stepped into the next room to leave him undisturbed. After a time, not hearing him move, he looked in and to his surprise the stranger had disappeared. On the desk lay a sheet of paper on which was written three verses of a poem. It was his 'Bells.' The judge has had them framed, so I hear. There was enough snow on the ground to bring out the cutters, and Poe had the rhythm of the bells ringing in his head and being afraid he would forget it he pulled the judge's doorbell. I wish he'd rung mine. I must get the poem for you, Harry—it's as famous now as 'The Raven.' Richard, I hear, reads it so that you can distinguish the sound of each bell."

"Well, he taught me a lesson," said Harry, tucking the blanket close around his uncle's

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kness—"one I have never forgotten, and never will. He sent me to bed a wreck, I remember, but I got up the next morning with a new mast in me and all my pumps working."

"You mean—" and St. George smiled meaningly and tossed his hand up as if emptying a glass.

"Yes—just that—" rejoined Harry with a nod. "It's so hot out where I have been that a glass of native rum is as bad as a snake bite and everybody except a native leaves it alone. But if I had gone to the North Pole instead of the equator I would have done the same. Men like you and father, and Mr. Richard Horn and Mr. Kennedy, who have been brought up on moderation, may feel as they choose about it, but I'm going to let it alone. It's the devil when it gets into your blood and mine's not made for it. I'd like to thank Mr. Poe if I dared, which I wouldn't, of course, if I ever saw him, for what he did for me. I wouldn't be surprised if he would give a good deal himself to do the same—or has he pulled out?"

"He never has pulled in, Harry—not continuously. Richard has the right of it. Poe is a man pursued by a devil and lives always on the watch to prevent the fiend from getting the best of him. Months at a time he wins and then

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there comes a day when the devil gets on top. He says himself—he told me this the last time I saw him—that he really lives a life devoted to his literary work; that he shuts himself up from everybody; and that the desire for society only comes upon him when he's excited by drink. Then, and only then, does he go among his fellows. There is some truth in that, my son, for as long as I have known him I have never seen him in his cups except that one night at my house. A courteous, well-bred gentleman, my boy—most punctilious about all his obligations and very honest about his failings. All he said to me the next day when he sobered up—I kept him all that night, you remember—was: 'I was miserably weak and inexcusably drunk last night, Mr. Temple. If that was all it would make no difference; I have been very drunk before, and I will be very drunk again; but in addition to my being drunk I insulted you and your friends and ruined your dinner. That makes every difference. Don't let it cause a break between us. Let me come again. And now please brush it from your mind. If you knew how I suffer over this fiend who tortures and gloats over me you'd only have the greatest pity for me, in your heart.' Then he wrung my hand and left the house."

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"Well, that's all any of us could do," sighed Harry, leaning back in his chair, his eyes on the ceiling. "It makes some difference, however, of whom you ask forgiveness. I've been willing to say the same kind of thing to my father ever since my affair with Mr. Willits, but it would have fallen on deaf ears. I had another trial at it yesterday, and you know what happened."

"I don't think your father knew you, Harry," protested St. George, with a negative wave of his hand.

"I hope he didn't—I shouldn't like to think he did. But, by heaven! it broke my heart to see him, Uncle George. You would hardly know him. Even his voice has changed and the shade over his eyes and the way he twists his head when he looks at you really gave me a creepy feeling," and the young man passed his fingers across his own eyes as if to shut out some hideous object.

"Was he looking straight at you when he ordered you from the room?"

"Straight as he could."

"Well, let us try and think it was the beard. And that reminds me, son, that it's got to come off, and right away. When Todd comes in he'll find my razors and——"

"No—I'll look up a barber."

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“Not down in this part of the town,” exclaimed St. George with a suggestive grimace.

“No—I’ll go up to Guy’s. There used to be an old negro there who looked after us young fellows when our beards began to sprout. He’ll take care of it all right. While I’m out I’ll stop and send Todd back. I’m going to end his apprenticeship to-day, and so he’ll help you dress. Nothing like getting into your clothes when you’re well enough to get out of bed; I’ve done it more than once,” and with a pat on his uncle’s shoulder and the readjustment of the blanket, he closed the door behind him and left the room.

“Everything is working fine, auntie,” he cried gaily as he passed the old woman who was hanging out the last of her wash. “I’ll be back in an hour. Don’t tell him yet—” and he strode out of the yard on his way uptown.

CHAPTER XXVIII

INTRUDERS of all kinds had thrust their heads between the dripping, slightly moist, and wholly dry installments of Aunt Jemima's Monday wash, and each and every one had been assailed by a vocabulary hurled at them through the creaky gate, and as far out as the street—peddlers; beggars; tramps; loose darkies with no visible means of support, who had smelt the cooking in the air—even goats with an acquired taste for stocking legs and window curtains—all of whom had either been invited out, whirled out, or thrown out, dependent upon the damage inflicted, the size of the favors asked, or the length of space intervening between Jemima's right arm and their backs. In all of these instances the old cook had been the broom and the intruders the dust. Being an expert in its use the intruders had succumbed before they had gotten through their first sentence. In the case of the goat even that privilege was denied him; it was the handle and not the brush-part which ended the argument. To see Aunt Jemima get rid of a goat in one whack and two jumps was not

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only a lesson in condensed conversation, but furnished a sight one rarely forgot—the goat never!

This morning the situation was reversed. It was Aunt Jemima who came flying upstairs, her eyes popping from her head, her plump hands flattened against her big, heaving bosom, her breath gone in the effort to tell her dreadful news before she should drop dead.

“Marse George! who d’ye think’s downstairs?” she gasped, bursting in the door of his bedroom, without even the customary tap. “Oh, bless Gawd! dat you’s e outen dat bed! and dressed and tryin’ yo’ po’ legs about the room. He’s comin’ up. Got a man wid him I ain’t neber see befo’. Says he’s a-lookin’ fer somebody! Git in de closet an’ I’ll tell him you’s e out an’ den I’ll run an’ watch for Marse Harry at de gate. Oh, I doan’ like dis yere bus’ness,” and she began to wring her hands.

St. George, who had been listening to the old woman with mingled feelings of wonder and curiosity, raised his hand to silence her. Whether she had gone daft or was more than usually excited he could not for the moment decide.

“Get your breath, Jemima, and tell me what you’re talking about. Who’s downstairs?”

“Ain’t I jes’ don’ tol’ yer? Got a look on him make ye shiver all over; says he’s gwineter

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s'arch de house. He's got a constable wid him — dat is, he's got a man dat looks like a constable, an' ——"

St. George laid his hands on the old woman's shoulders, and turned her about.

"Hush your racket this instant, and tell me who is downstairs?"

"Marse Talbot Rutter," she wheezed; "come f'om de country — got mud all ober his boots."

"Mr. Harry's father?"

Aunt Jemima choked and nodded: there was no breath left for more.

"Who did he ask for?" St. George was calm enough now.

"Didn't ask fer nobody; he say, 'I'm lookin' fer a man dat come in yere las' night.' I see he didn't know me an' I neber let on. Den he say, 'Hab you got any boa'ders yere?' an' I say, 'I got one,' an' den he 'tempted ter pass me an' I say, 'Wait a minute 'til I see ef he's ouden de bed.' Now, what's I gwineter do? He doan' mean no good to Marse Harry an' he'll drike him 'way ag'in, an' he jes' come back an' you gittin' well a-lovin' of him — an' ——"

An uncertain step was heard in the hall.

"Dat's him," Jemima whispered hoarsely, behind her hand, "what'll I do? Doan' let him come in. I'll ——"

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St. George moved past her and pushed back the door.

Colonel Rutter stood outside.

The two men looked into each other's faces.

"I'm in search, sir," the colonel began, shading his eyes with his fingers, the brighter light of the room weakening his sight, "for a young sailor whom I am informed stopped here last night, and who . . . *St. George!* What in the name of God are you doing in a place like this?"

"Come inside, Talbot," Temple replied calmly, his eyes fixed on Rutter's drawn face and faltering gaze. "Aunt Jemima, hand Colonel Rutter a chair. You will excuse me if I sit down—I am just out of bed after a long illness, and am a little weak," and he settled slowly into his seat. "My servant tells me that you are looking for a——"

St. George paused. Rutter was paying no more attention to what he said than if he had been in the next room. He was straining his eyes about the apartment; taking in the empty bed from which St. George had just arisen, the cheap chairs and small pine table and the kitchen plates and cup which still held the remains of St. George's breakfast. He waited until Jemima had backed out of the door, her scared face still a tangle of emotions—fear for her master's

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safety uppermost. His eyes again veered to St. George.

"What does it all mean, Temple?" he asked in a dazed way.

"I don't think that subject is under discussion, Talbot, and we will, therefore, pass it. To what do I owe the honor of this visit?"

"Don't be a damned fool, St. George! Don't you see I'm half crazy? Harry has come back and he is hiding somewhere in this neighborhood."

"How do you know?" he inquired coolly. He did not intend to help Rutter one iota in his search until he found out why he wanted Harry. No more cursing of either his son or himself—that was another chapter which was closed.

"Because I've been hunting for him all day. He rode out to Moorlands yesterday, and I didn't know him, he's so changed. But think of it! St. George, I ordered him out of my office. I took him for a road-peddler. And he's going to sea again—he told Alec as much. I tell you I have got to get hold of him! Don't sit there and stare at me, man! tell me where I can find my son!"

"What made you suppose he was here, Talbot?" The same cool, measured speech and manner, but with a more open mind behind it

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now. The pathetic aspect of the man, and the acute suffering shown in every tone of his voice, had begun to tell upon the invalid.

“Because a man I’ve got downstairs brought Harry here last night. He is not positive, as it was quite dark, but he thinks this is the place. I went first to the Barkeley Line, found they had a ship in—the *Mohican*—and saw the captain, who told me of a man who came aboard at Rio. Then I learned where he had put up for the night—a low sailors’ retreat—and found this peddler who said he had sold Harry the silks which he offered me. He brought me here.”

“Well, I can’t help you any. There are only two rooms—I occupy this and my old cook, Jemima, has the other. I have been here for over a month.”

“Here! in this God-forsaken place! Why, we thought you had gone to Virginia. That’s why we have had no answers to our letters, and we’ve hunted high and low for you. Certainly you have heard about the Patapsco and what——”

“I certainly have heard nothing, Talbot, and as I have just told you, I’d rather you would not discuss my affairs. The last time you saw fit to encroach upon them brought only bitterness, and I prefer not to repeat it. Anything

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you have to say about Harry I will gladly hear. Go on—I'm listening."

"For God's sake, St. George, don't take that tone with me! If you knew how wretched I am you'd be sorry for me. I am a broken-down man! If Harry goes away again without my seeing him I don't want to live another day. When Alec came running back last night and told me that I had cursed my son to his face, I nearly went out of my mind. I knew when I saw Alec's anger that it was true, and I knew, too, what a brute I had been. I ran to Annie's room, took her in my arms, and asked her pardon. All night I walked my room; at daylight I rang for Alec, sent for Matthew, and he hooked up the carryall and we came in here. Annie wanted to come with me, but I wouldn't let her. I knew Seymour wasn't out of bed that early, and so I drove straight to the shipping office and waited until it was open, and I've been hunting for him ever since. You and I have been boys together, St. George—don't lay up against me all the insulting things I've said to you—all the harm I've done you! God knows I've repented of it! Will you forgive me, St. George, for the sake of the old days—for the sake of my boy to whom you have been a father? Will you give me your hand? What in the name of

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common sense should you and I be enemies for? I, who owe you more than I owe any man in the world! Will you help me?"

St. George was staring now. He bent forward, gripped the arms of his chair for a better purchase, and lifted himself to his feet. There he stood swaying, Rutter's outstretched hands in both of his, his whole nature stirred—only one thought in his heart—to wipe out the past and bring father and son together.

"Yes, Talbot—I'll forgive you and I'll help you—I have helped you! Harry will be here in a few minutes—I sent him out to get his beard shaved off—that's why you didn't know him."

The colonel reeled and but for St. George's hand would have lost his balance. All the blood was gone from his cheeks. He tried to speak, but the lips refused to move. For an instant St. George thought he would sink to the floor.

"You say—Harry . . . is here!" he stammered out at last, catching wildly at Temple's other hand to steady himself.

"Yes, he came across Todd by the merest accident or he would have gone to the Eastern Shore to look me up. Listen!—that's his step now! Turn that door knob and hold out your hands to him, and after you've got your arms around him get down on your knees and thank

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your God that you've got such a son! I do, every hour I live!"

The door swung wide and Harry strode in, his eyes glistening, his cheeks aglow.

"Up, are you, and in your clothes!" he cried joyfully, all the freshness of the morning in his voice. "Well, that's something like! How do you like me now?—smooth as a marlinspike and my hair trimmed in the latest fashion, so old Bones says. He didn't know me either till he got clear down below my mouth, and when my chin began to show he gave a——"

He stopped and stared at his father, who had been hidden from sight by the swinging door. The surprise was so great that his voice clogged in his throat. Rutter stood like one who had seen an apparition.

St. George broke the silence:

"It's all right, Harry—give your father your hand."

The colonel made a step forward, threw out one arm as if to regain his equilibrium and swayed toward a chair, his frame shaking convulsively, wholly unstrung, sobbing like a child. Harry sprang to catch him and the two sank down together—no word of comfort—only the mute appeal of touch—the brown hand wet with his father's tears.

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For some seconds neither spoke, then Rutter raised his head and looked into his son's face.

"I didn't know it was you, Harry. I have been hunting you all day to ask your pardon." It was the memory of the last indignity he had heaped upon him that tortured him.

"I knew you didn't, father."

"Don't go away again, Harry, please don't, my son!" he pleaded, strangling the tears, trying to regain his self-control—tears had often of late moistened Rutter's lids. "Your mother can't stand it another year, and I'm breaking up—half blind. You won't go, will you?"

"No—not right away, father—we'll talk of that later." He was still in the dark as to how it had come about. All he knew was that for the first time in all his life his father had asked his pardon, and for the first time in his life the barrier which held them apart had been broken down.

The colonel braced himself in his seat in one supreme effort to get himself in hand. One of his boasts was that he had never lost his self-control. Harry rose to his feet and stood beside him. St. George, trembling from his own weakness, a great throb of thankfulness in his heart, had kept his place in his chair, his eyes turned away from the scene. His own mind

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had also undergone a change. He had always known that somewhere down in Talbot Rutter's heart—down underneath the strata of pride and love of power, there could be found the heart of a father—indeed he had often predicted to himself just such a coming together. It was the boy's pluck and manliness that had done it; a manliness free from all truckling or cringing. And then his tenderness over the man who had of all others in the world wronged him most! He could hardly keep his glad hands off the boy.

"You will go home with me, of course, won't you, Harry?" He must ask his consent now—this son of his whom he had driven from his home and insulted in the presence of his friends at the club, and whom he could see was now absolutely independent of him—and what was more to the point absolutely his own master.

"Yes, of course, I'll go home with you, father," came the respectful answer, "if mother isn't coming in. Did she or Alec say anything to you about it before you left?"

"No, she isn't coming in to-day—I wouldn't let her. It was too early when I started. But that's not what I mean," he went on with increasing excitement. "I want you to go home with me and stay forever; I want to forget the past: I want St. George to hear me say so!

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Come and take your place at the head of the estate—I will have Gorsuch arrange the papers to-morrow. You and St. George must go back with me to-day. I have the large carryall—Matthew is with me—he stopped at the corner—he's there now."

"That's very kind of you, father," Harry rejoined calmly, concealing as best he could his disappointment at not being able to see his mother.

"Yes! of course you will go with me," his father continued in nervous, jerky tones. "Please send the servant for Matthew, my coachman, and have him drive up. As for you, St. George, you can't stay here another hour. How you ever got here is more than I can understand. Moorlands is the place for you both—you'll get well there. My carriage is a very easy one. Perhaps I had better go for Matthew myself."

"No, don't move, Talbot," rejoined St. George in a calm, firm voice, wondering at Talbot's manner. He had never seen him like this. All his old-time measured talk and manner were gone; he was like some breathless, hunted man pleading for his life. "I'm very grateful to you, but I shall stay here. Harry, will you kindly go for Matthew?"

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“Stay here!—for how long?” cried the colonel in astonishment, his glance following Harry as he left the room in obedience to his uncle’s request.

“Well, perhaps for the balance of the winter.”

“In this hole?” His voice had grown stronger.

“Certainly; why not?” replied St. George simply, moving his chair so that his guest might see him the better. “My servants are taking care of me. I can pay my way here, and it’s about the only place in which I can pay it, and I want to tell you frankly, Talbot, that I am very happy to be here—am very glad, really, to get such a place. No one could be more devoted than my Todd and Jemima—I shall never forget their kindness.”

“But you’re not a pauper?” cried the colonel in some heat.

“That was what you were once good enough to call me—the last time we met. The only change is that then I owed Pawson and that now I owe Todd,” he replied, trying to repress a smile, as if the humor of the situation would overcome him if he was not careful. “Thank you very much, Talbot—and I mean every word of it—but I’ll stay where I am, at least for the present.”

“But the bank is on its legs again,” rebounded

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the colonel, ignoring all reference to the past, his voice gaining in volume.

"So am I," laughed St. George, tapping his lean thighs with his transparent fingers—"on a very shaky pair of legs—so shaky that I shall have to go to bed again pretty soon."

"But you're coming out all right, St. George!" Rutter had squared himself in his chair and was now looking straight at his host. "Gorsuch has written you half a dozen letters about it and not a word from you in reply. Now I see why. But all that will come out in time, I tell you. You're not going to stay here for an hour longer." His old personality was beginning to assert itself.

"The future doesn't interest me, Talbot," smiled St. George in perfect good-humor. "In my experience my future has always been worse than my past."

"But that is no reason why you shouldn't go home with me now and let us take care of you," Rutter cried in a still more positive tone. "Annie will be delighted. Stay a month with me—stay a year. After what I owe you, St. George, there's nothing I wouldn't do for you."

"You have already done it, Talbot—every obligation is wiped out," rejoined St. George in a satisfied tone.

"How?"

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“By coming here and asking Harry’s pardon—that is more to me than all the things I have ever possessed,” and his voice broke as he thought of the change that had taken place in Harry’s fortunes in the last half hour.

“Then come out to Moorlands and let me prove it!” exclaimed the colonel, leaning forward in his eagerness and grasping St. George by the sleeve.

“No,” replied St. George in appreciative but positive tones—showing his mind was fully made up. “If I go anywhere I’ll go back to my house on Kennedy Square—that is to the little of it that is still mine. I’ll stay there for a day or two, to please Harry—or until they turn me out again, and then I’ll come back here. Change of air may do me good, and besides, Jemima and Todd should get a rest.”

The colonel rose to his feet: “You shall do no such thing!” he exploded. The old dominating air was in full swing now. “I tell you you *will* come with me! Damn you, St. George!—if you don’t I’ll never speak to you again, so help me, God!”

St. George threw back his head and burst into a roar of laughter in which, after a moment of angry hesitation, Rutter joined. Then he reached down and, with his hand on St. George’s shoul-

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der, said in a coaxing tone—"Come along to Moorlands, old fellow—I'd be so glad to have you, and so will Annie, and we'll live over the old days."

Harry's re-entrance cut short the answer.

"No, father," he cried cheerily, taking up the refrain. He had seen the friendly caress and had heard the last sentence. "Uncle George is still too ill and too weak for so long a drive. It's only the excitement over my return that keeps him up now—and he'll collapse if we don't look out—but he'll collapse in a better place than this!" he added with joyous emphasis. "Todd is outside, the hack is at the gate, and Jemima is now waiting for him in his old room at home. Give me your arm, you blessed old cripple, and let me help you downstairs. Out of the way, father, or he'll change his mind and I'll have to pick him up bodily and carry him."

St. George shot a merry glance at Harry from under his eyebrows, and with a wave of his hand and a deprecating shake of his head at the colonel said:

"These rovers and freebooters, Talbot, have so lorded it over their serfs that they've lost all respect for their betters. Give me your hand, you vagabond, and if you break my neck I'll make you bury me."

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The colonel looked on silently and a sharp pain gripped his throat. When, in all his life, had he ever been spoken to by his boy in that spirit, and when in all his life had he ever seen that same tenderness in Harry's eyes? What had he not missed?

"Harry, may I make a suggestion?" he asked almost apologetically. The young fellow turned his head in respectful attention: "Put St. George in my carriage—it is much more comfortable—and let me drive him home—my eyes are quite good in the day-time, after I get used to the light, and I am still able to take the road. Then put your servant and mine in the hack with St. George's and your own luggage."

"Capital idea!" cried Harry enthusiastically. "I never thought of it! Attention, company! Eyes to the front, Mr. Temple! You'll now remain on waiting orders until I give you permission to move, and as this may take some time—please hold on to him, father, until I get his chair" (they were already out on the landing, on the very plank where Harry had passed the night)—"you'll go back to your quarters. . . . Here sir, these are your quarters," and Harry dragged the chair into position with his foot. "Down with you . . . that's it . . . and you will stay here until the baggage and hospital

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train arrives, when you'll occupy a front seat in the van—and there will be no grumbling or lagging behind of any kind, remember, or you'll get ten days in the calaboose!"

Pawson was on the curbstone, his face shining, his semaphore arms and legs in action, his eyes searching the distance, when the two vehicles came in sight. He had heard the day boat was very late, and as there had been a heavy fog over night, did not worry about the delay in their arrival.

What troubled him more was the change in Mr. Temple's appearance. He had gone away ruddy, erect, full of vigor and health, and here he was being helped out of the carriage, pale, shrivelled, his eyes deep set in his head. His voice, though, was still strong if his legs were shaky, and there seemed also to be no diminution in the flow of his spirits. Wesley had kept that part of him intact whatever changes the climate had made.

"Ah, Pawson—glad to see you!" the invalid called gaily, extending his hand as soon as he stood erect on the sidewalk. "Back again, you see—these old derelicts bob up once in a while when you least expect them." And he wrung his hand heartily. "So the vultures, it seems,

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have not turned up yet and made their roost in my nest. Most kind of you to stay home and give up your business to meet me! You know Colonel Talbot Rutter, of Moorlands, I presume, and Mr. Harry Rutter—Of course you do! Harry has told me all about your midnight meeting when you took him for a constable, and he took you for a thief. No—please don't laugh, Pawson—Mr. Rutter is the worst kind of a thief. Not only has he stolen my heart because of his goodness to me, but he threatens to make off with my body. Give me your hand, Todd. Now a little lift on that rickety elbow and I reckon we can make that flight of steps. I have come down them so many times of late with no expectation of ever mounting them again that it will be a novelty to be sure of staying over night. Come in, Talbot, and see the home of my ancestors. I am sorry the Black Warrior is all gone—I sent Kennedy the last bottle some time ago—pity that vintage didn't last forever. Do you know, Talbot, if I had my way, I'd have a special spigot put in the City Spring labelled 'Gift of a once-prominent citizen,' and supply the inhabitants with 1810—something fit for a gentleman to drink."

They were all laughing now; the colonel carrying the pillows Todd had tucked behind

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the invalid's back, Harry a few toilet articles wrapped in paper, and Matthew his cane—and so the cortege crawled up the steps, crossed the dismantled dining-room—the colonel aghast at the change made in its interior since last he saw it—and so on to St. George's room where Todd and Jemima put him to bed.

His uncle taken care of—(his father had kept on to Moorlands to tell his mother the good news)—Harry mounted the stairs to his old room, which Pawson had generously vacated.

The appointments were about the same as when he left; time and poverty had wrought but few changes. Pawson had moved in a few books and there was a night table beside the small bed with a lamp on it, showing that he read late; but the bureau and shabby arm-chair, and the closet, stripped now of the young attorney's clothes to make room for the wanderer's—(a scant, sorry lot)—were pretty much the same as Harry had found on that eventful night when he had driven in through the rain and storm beside his Uncle George, his father's anathemas ringing in his ears.

Unconsciously his mind went back to the events of the day;—more especially to his uncle's wonderful vitality and the blissful change his own home-coming had wrought not only in

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his physique, but in his spirits. Then his father's shattered form, haggard face, and uncertain glance rose before him, and with it came the recollection of all that had happened during the previous hours: his father's brutal outburst in the small office and the marvellous effect produced upon him when he learned the truth from Alec's lips; his hurried departure in the gray dawn for the ship and his tracing him to Jemima's house. More amazing still was his present bearing toward himself and St. George; his deference to their wishes and his willingness to follow and not lead. Was it his ill-health that had brought this astounding reformation in a man who brooked no opposition?—or had his heart really softened toward him so that from this on he could again call him father in the full meaning of the term? At this a sudden, acute pain wrenched his heart. Perhaps he had not been glad enough to see him—perhaps in his anxiety over his uncle he had failed in those little tendernesses which a returned prodigal should have shown the father who had held out his arms and asked his forgiveness. Why was he not more affected by the sight of his suffering? When he first saw his uncle he had not been able to keep the tears back—and yet his eyes were dry enough when he saw his father.

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At this he fell to wondering as to the present condition of the colonel's mind. What was he thinking of in that lonely drive? He must be nearing Moorlands by this time and Alec would meet him, and later the dear mother—and the whole story would be told. He could see her glad face—her eyes streaming tears, her heart throbbing with the joy of his return.

And it is a great pity he could not have thus looked in upon the autocrat of Moorlands as he sat hunched up on the back seat of the carryall, his head bowed, the only spoken words being Matthew's cheery hastening of his horses. And it is even a greater pity that the son could not have searched as well the secret places of the man's heart: such clearings out of doubts and misgivings make for peace and good-fellowship and righteousness in this world of misunderstanding.

That a certain rest had come into Rutter's soul could be seen in his face—a peace that had not settled on his features for years—but, if the truth must be told, he was far from happy. Somehow the joy he had anticipated at the boy's home-coming had not been realized. With the warmth of Harry's grasp still lingering in his own and the tones of his voice still sounding in

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his ears, try as he might, he yet felt aloof from him—outside—far off. Something had snapped in the years they had been apart—something he knew could never be repaired. Where there had once been boyish love there was now only filial regard. Down in his secret soul he felt it—down in his secret soul he knew it! Worse than that—another had replaced him! “Come, you dear old cripple!”—he could hear the voice and see the love and joy in the boy’s eyes as he shouted it out. Yes, St. George was his father now!

Then his mind reverted to his former treatment of his son and for the hundredth time he reviewed his side of the case. What else could he have done and still maintain the standards of his ancestors?—the universal question around Kennedy Square, when obligations of blood and training were to be considered. After all it had only been an object lesson; he had fully intended to forgive him later on. When Harry was a boy he punished him as boys were punished; when he became a man he punished him as men were punished. But for St. George the plan would long since have worked. St. George had balked him twice—once at the club and once at his home in Kennedy Square, when he practically ordered him from the house.

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And yet he could not but admit—and at this he sat bolt upright in his seat—that even according to his own high standards both St. George and Harry had measured up to them! Rather than touch another penny of his uncle's money, Harry had become an exile; rather than accept a penny from his enemy, St. George had become a pauper. With this view of the case fermenting in his mind—and he had not realized the extent of both sacrifices until that moment—a feeling of pride swept through him. It was *his boy* and *his friend*, who had measured up!—by suffering, by bodily weakness—by privation—by starvation! And both had manfully and cheerfully stood the test! It was the blood of the DeRuyters which had put courage into the boy; it was the blood of the cavaliers that had made Temple the man he was. And that old DeRuyter blood! How it had told in every glance of his son's eyes and every intonation of his voice! If he had not accumulated a fortune he would—and that before many years were gone. But!—and here a chill went through him. Would not this still further separate them, and if it did how could he restore in the shortest possible time the old dependence and the old confidence? His efforts so far had met with almost a rebuff, for Harry had shown no particular

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pleasure when he told him of his intention to put him in charge of the estate: he had watched his face closely for a sign of satisfaction, but none had come. He had really seemed more interested in getting St. George downstairs than in being the fourth heir of Moorlands—indeed, it was very evident that he had no thought for anybody or anything except St. George.

All this the son might have known could he have sat by his father in the carryall on his way to Moorlands.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE sudden halting of two vehicles close to the horse-block of the Temple Mansion—one an aristocratic carryall driven by a man in livery, and the other a dilapidated city hack in charge of a negro in patched overcoat and whitey-brown hat, the discharge of their inmates, one of whom was Colonel Talbot Rutter of Moorlands carrying two pillows, and another a strange young man loaded down with blankets—the slow disembarking of a gentleman in so wretched a state of health that he was practically carried up the front steps by his body-servant, and the subsequent arrival of Dr. Teackle on the double quick—was a sight so unusual in and around peaceful Kennedy Square that it is not surprising that all sorts of reports—most of them alarming—reached the club long before St. George had been comfortably tucked away in bed.

Various versions were afloat: “St. George was back from Wesley with a touch of chills and fever—” St. George was back from Wesley with a load of buckshot in his right arm—”

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“St. George had broken his collar-bone riding to hounds—” etc.

Richard Horn was the first to spring to his feet—it was the afternoon hour and the club was full—and cross the Square on the run, followed by Clayton, Bowman, and two or three others. These, with one accord, banged away on the knocker, only to be met by Dr. Teackle, who explained that there was nothing seriously the matter with Mr. Temple, except an attack of foolhardiness in coming up the bay when he should have stayed in bed—but even that should cause his friends no uneasiness, as he was still as tough as a lightwood knot, and bubbling over with good-humor; all he needed was rest, and that he must have—so please everybody come to-morrow.

By the next morning the widening of ripples caused by the dropping of a high-grade invalid into the still pool of Kennedy Square, spread with such force and persistency that one wavelet overflowed Kate’s dressing-room. Indeed, it came in with Mammy Henny and her coffee.

“Marse George home, honey—Ben done see Todd. Got a mis’ry in his back dat bad it tuk two gemmens to tote him up de steps.”

“Uncle George home, and ill!”

That was enough for Kate. She didn’t want

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any coffee—she didn't want any toast or muffins, or hominy—she wanted her shoes and stockings and—yes, everything, and quick!—and would Mammy Henny call Ben and send him right away to Mr. Temple's and find out how her dear Uncle George had passed the night, and give him her dearest love and tell him she would come right over to see him the moment she could get into her clothes; and could she send anything for him to eat; and did the doctor think it was dangerous—? Yes—and Ben must keep on to Dr. Teackle's and find out if it *was* dangerous—and say to him that Miss Seymour wanted to know *immediately*, and—(here the poor child lost her breath, she was dressing all the time, Mammy Henny's fingers and ears doing their best)—“and tell Mr. Temple, too,” she rushed on, “that he must send word by Ben for *anything* and *everything* he needed” (strong accent on the two words) . . . all of which was repeated through the crack of the door to patient Ben when he presented himself, with the additional assurance that he must tell Mr. Temple it wouldn't be five minutes before she would be with him—as she was nearly dressed, all but her hair.

She was right about her good intentions, but she was wrong about the number of minutes

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necessary to carry them out. There was her morning gown to button, and her gaiters to lace, and her hair to be braided and caught up in her neck (she always wore it that way in the morning) and the dearest of snug bonnets—a “*cabriolet*” from Paris—a sort of hood, stiffened with wires, out of which peeped pink rosebuds quite as they do from a trellis—had to be put on, and the white strings tied “just so”—the bows flaring out and the long ends smoothed flat; and then the lace cape and scarf and her parasol;—all these and a dozen other little niceties had to be adjusted before she could trip down her father’s stairs and out of her father’s swinging gate and on through the park to her dear Uncle George.

But when she did—and it took her all of an hour—nothing that the morning sun shone on was quite as lovely, and no waft of air so refreshing or so welcome as our beloved heroine when she burst in upon him.

“Oh!—you dear, *dear* thing!” she cried, tossing her parasol on Pawson’s table and stretching out her arms toward him sitting in his chair. “Oh, I am so sorry! Why didn’t you let me know you were ill? I would have gone down to Wesley. Oh!—I *knew* something was the matter with you or you would have answered my letters.”

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He had struggled to his feet at the first sound of her footsteps in the hall, and had her in his arms long before she had finished her greeting;—indeed her last sentence was addressed to the collar of his coat against which her cheek was cushioned.

“Who said I was ill?” he asked with one of his bubbling laughs when he got his breath.

“Todd told Ben—and you *are*!—and it breaks my heart.” She was holding herself off now, scanning his pale face and shrunken frame. “Oh, I am so sorry you did not let me know!”

“Todd is a chatterer, and Ben no better; I’ve only had a bad cold—and you couldn’t have done me a bit of good if you had come—and now I am entirely well, never felt better in my life. Oh—but it’s good to get hold of you, Kate,—and you are still the same bunch of roses. Sit down now and tell me all about it. I wish I had a better chair for you, my dear, but the place is quite dismantled, as you see. I expected to stay the winter when I left.”

She had not given a thought to the chair or to the changes—had not even noticed them. That the room was stripped of its furniture prior to a long stay was what invariably occurred in her own house every summer: it was her precious uncle’s pale, shrunken face and the blue

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veins that showed in the backs of his dear transparent hands which she held between her own, and the thin, emaciated wrists that absorbed her.

“You poor, dear Uncle George!” she purred — “and nobody to look after you.” He had drawn up Pawson’s chair and had placed her in it beside the one he sat in, and had then dropped slowly into his own, the better to hide from her his weakness—but it did not deceive her. “I’m going to have you put back to bed this very minute; you are not strong enough to sit up. Let me call Aunt Jemima.”

St. George shook his head good-naturedly in denial and smoothed her hands with his fingers.

“Call nobody and do nothing but sit beside me and let me look into your face and listen to your voice. I have been pretty badly shaken up; had two weeks of it that couldn’t have been much worse—but since then I have been on the mend and am getting stronger every minute. I haven’t had any medicine and I don’t want any now—I just want you and—” he hesitated, and seeing nothing in her eyes of any future hope for Harry, finished the sentence, with “and one or two others to sit by me and cheer me up; that’s better than all the doctors in the world. And now, first about your father and then about yourself.”

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“Oh, he’s very well,” she rejoined absently. “He’s off somewhere, went away two days ago. He’ll be back in a week. But you must have something to eat—*good* things!”—her mind still occupied with his condition. “I’m going to have some chicken broth made the moment I get home and it will be sent fresh every day: and, *you* must eat every bit of it!”

Again St. George’s laugh rang out. He had let her run on—it was music to his ears—that he might later on find some clue on which he could frame a question he had been revolving in his mind ever since he heard her voice in the hall. He would not tell her about Harry—better wait until he could read her thoughts the clearer. If he could discover by some round-about way that she would still refuse to see him it would be best not to embarrass her with any such request; especially on this her first visit.

“Yes—I’ll eat anything and everything you send me, you dear Kate—and many thanks to you, provided you’ll come with it—you are the best broth for me. But you haven’t answered my question—not all of it. What have *you* been doing since I left?”

“Wondering whether you would forgive me for the rude way in which I left you the last time I saw you,—the night of Mr. Horn’s read-

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ing, for one thing. I went off with Mr. Willits and never said a word to you. I wrote you a letter telling you how sorry I was, but you never answered it, and that made me more anxious than ever."

"What foolishness, Kate! I never got it, of course, or you would have heard from me right away. A number of my letters have gone astray of late. But I don't remember a thing about it, except that you walked off with your—" again he hesitated—"with Mr. Willits, which, of course, was the most natural thing for you to do in the world. How is he, by the way?"

Kate drew back her shoulders with that quick movement common to her when some antagonism in her mind preceded her spoken word.

"I don't know—I haven't seen him for some weeks."

St. George started in his chair: "You haven't! He isn't ill, is he?"

"No, I think not," she rejoined calmly.

"Oh, then he has gone down to his father's. Yes, I remember he goes quite often," he ventured.

"No, I think he is still here." Her gaze was on the window as she spoke, through which could be seen the tops of the trees glistening in the sunlight.

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"And you haven't seen him? Why?" asked St. George wonderingly—he was not sure he had heard her aright.

"I told him not to come," she replied in a positive tone.

St. George settled back in his chair. Had there been a clock in the room its faintest tick would have rung out like a trip-hammer.

"Then you have had a quarrel: he has broken his promise to you and got drunk again."

"No, he has never broken it; he has kept it as faithfully as Harry kept his."

"You don't mean, Kate, that you have broken off your engagement?"

She reached over and picked up her parasol: "There never was any engagement. I have always felt sorry for Mr. Willits and tried my best to love him and couldn't—that is all. He understands it perfectly; we both do. It was one of the things that couldn't be."

All sorts of possibilities surged one after the other through the old diplomat's mind. A dim light increasing in intensity began to shine about him. What it meant he dared not hope. "What does your father say?" he asked slowly, after a pause in which he had followed every expression that crossed her face.

"Nothing—and it wouldn't alter the case if

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he did. I am the best judge of what is good for me." There was a certain finality in her cadences that repelled all further discussion. He remembered having heard the same ring before.

"When did all this happen?—this telling him not to come?" he persisted, determined to widen the inquiry. His mind was still unable to fully grasp the situation.

"About five weeks ago. Do you want to know the very night?" She turned her head as she spoke and looked at him with her full, deep eyes.

"Yes, if you wish me to."

"The night Mr. Horn read 'The Cricket on the Hearth,'" she answered in a tone of relief—as if some great crisis had marked the hour, the passing of which had brought her infinite peace. "I told him when I got home, and I have never seen him since."

For some seconds St. George did not move. He had turned from her and sat with his head resting on his hand, his eyes intent on the smouldering fire: he dare not trust himself to speak; wide ranges opened before him; the light had strengthened until it was blinding. Kate sat motionless, her hands in her lap, her eyes searching St. George's face for some indication of the effect of her news. Then, finding him

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still silent and absorbed in his thoughts, she went on:

"There was nothing else to do, Uncle George. I had done all I could to please my father and one or two of my friends. There was nothing against him—he was very kind and very considerate—but somehow I—" She paused and drew a long breath.

"Somehow what?" demanded St. George, raising his head quickly and studying her the closer. The situation was becoming vital now—too vital for any further delay.

"Oh, I don't know—I couldn't love him—that's all. He has many excellent qualities—too many maybe," and she smiled faintly. "You know I never liked people who were too good—that is, too willing to do everything you wanted them to do—especially men who ought really to be masters and—" She stopped and played with the top of her parasol, smoothing the knob with her palm as if the better to straighten out the tangle in her mind. "I expect you will think me queer, Uncle George, but I have come to the conclusion that I will never love anybody again—I am through with all that. It's very hard, you know, to mend a thing when it's broken. I used to say to myself that when I grew to be a woman I supposed I

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would love as any other woman seemed content to love; that no romance of a young girl was ever realized and that they could only be found in love stories. But my theories all went to pieces when I heard Mr. Horn that night. Dot's love for John the Carrier—I have read it so often since that I know the whole story by heart—Dot's love for John was the real thing, but May Fielding's love for Tackleton wasn't. And it seemed so wonderful when her lover came home and—it's foolish, I know—very silly—that I should have been so moved by just the reading of a story—but it's true. It takes only a very little to push you over when you are on the edge, and I had been on the edge for a long time. But don't let us talk about it, dear Uncle George," she added with a forced smile. "I'm going to take care of you now and be a charming old maid with side curls and spectacles and make flannel things for the poor—you just wait and see what a comfort I will be." Her lips were trembling, the tears crowding over the edges of her lids.

St. George stretched out his hand and in his kindest voice said:

"Was it the carrier and his wife, or was it the sailor boy who came back so fine and strong, that affected you, Kate?—and made you give

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up Mr. Willits?" He would go to the bottom now.

"It was everything, Uncle George—the sweetness of it all—her pride in her husband—his doubts of her—her repentance; and yet she did what she thought was for the best; and then his forgiveness and the way he wanted to take her in his arms at last and she would not until she explained. And there was nothing really to explain—only love, and trust, and truth—all the time believing in him—loving him. Oh, it is cruel to part people—it's so mean and despicable! There are so many Tackletons—and the May Fieldings go to the altar and so on to their graves—and there is often such a very little difference between the two. I never gave my promise to Mr. Willits. I would not!—I could not! He kept hoping and waiting. He was very gentle and patient—he never coaxed nor pleaded, but just— Oh, Uncle George!—let me talk it all out—I have nobody else. I missed you so, and there was no one who could understand, and you wouldn't answer my letters." She was crying softly to herself, her beautiful head resting on her elbow pillowed on the back of his chair.

He leaned forward the closer: he loved this girl next best to Harry. Her sorrows were his

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own. Was it all coming out as he had hoped and prayed for? He could hardly restrain himself in his eagerness.

“Did you miss anybody else, Kate?” There was a peculiar tenderness in his voice.

She did not raise her head nor did she answer. St. George waited and repeated the question, slipping his hand over hers, as he spoke.

“It was the loneliness, Uncle George,” she replied, evading his inference. “I tried to forget it all, and I threw open our house and gave parties and dances—hardly a week but there has been something going on—but nothing did any good. I have been—yes—wretchedly unhappy and— No, it will only distress you to hear it—don’t let’s talk any more about it. I won’t let you go away again. I’ll go away with you if you don’t get better soon, anywhere you say. We’ll go down to the White Sulphur—Yes—we’ll go there. The air is so bracing—it wouldn’t be a week before all the color would come back to your cheeks and you be as strong as ever.”

He was not listening. His mind was framing a question—one he must ask without committing himself or her. He was running a parallel, really—reading her heart by a flank movement.

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"Kate, dear?" He had regained his position although he still kept hold of her hand.

"Yes, Uncle George."

"Did you write to Harry, as I asked you?"

"No, it wouldn't have done any good. I have had troubles enough of my own without adding any to his."

"Were you afraid he would not answer it?"

She lifted her head and tightened her fingers about his own, her wet eyes looking into his.

"I was afraid of myself. I have never known my own mind and I don't know it now. I have played fast and loose with everybody—I can't bind up a broken arm and then break it again."

"Wouldn't it be better to try?" he said softly.

"No, I don't think so."

St. George released her hand and settled back in his chair; his face grew grave. What manner of woman was this, and how could he reach the inner kernel of her heart? Again he raised his head, and leaning forward took both her hands between his own.

"I am going to tell you a story, Kate—one you have never heard—not all of it. When I was about your age—a little older perhaps, I gave my heart to a woman who had known me from a boy; with whom I had played when she was

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a child. I'm not going into the whole story, such things are always sad ; nor will I tell you anything of the beginning of the three happy months of our betrothal nor of what caused our separation. I shall only tell you of the cruelty of the end. There was a misunderstanding—a quarrel—I begging her forgiveness on my knees. All the time her heart was breaking. One little word from her would have healed everything. Some years after that she married and her life still goes on. I am what you see.”

Kate looked at him with swimming eyes. She dimly remembered that she had heard that her uncle had had a love affair in his youth and that his sweetheart had jilted him for a richer man, but she had never known that he had suffered so bitterly over it. Her heart went out to him all the more.

“Will you tell me who it was?” She had no right to ask ; but she might comfort him the better if she knew.

“Harry’s mother.”

Kate dropped his hands and drew back in her seat.

“You—loved—Mrs.—Rutter—and she—refused you for— Oh!—what a cruel thing to do! And what a fool she was! Now I know why you have been so good to Harry. Oh, you

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poor, dear Uncle George. Oh, to think that you of all men! Is there any one whose heart is not bruised and broken?" she added in a helpless tone.

"Plenty of them, Kate—especially those who have been willing to stoop a little and so triumph. Harry has waited three years for some word from you; he has not asked for it, for he believes you have forgotten him; and then he was too much of a man to encroach upon another's rights. Does your breaking off with Mr. Willits alter the case in any way?—does it make any difference? Is this sailor boy always to be a wanderer—never to come home to his people and the woman he loves?"

"He'll never come back to me, Uncle George," she said with a shudder, dropping her eyes. "I found that out the day we talked together in the park, just before he left. And he's not coming home. Father got a letter from one of his agents who had seen him. He was looking very well and was going up into the mountains—I wrote you about it. I am sorry you didn't get the letter—but of course he has written you too."

"Suppose I should tell you that he would come back if he thought you would be glad to see him—glad in the old way?"

Kate shook her head: "He would never come.

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He hates me, and I don't blame him. I hate myself when I think of it all."

"But if he should walk in now?"—he was very much afraid he would, and he was not quite ready for him yet. What he was trying to find out was not whether Kate would be glad to see Harry as a relief to her loneliness, but whether she really *loved* him.

Some tone in his voice caught her ear. She turned head quickly and looked at him with wondering gaze, as if she would read his inmost thoughts.

"You mean that he is coming, Uncle George—that Harry *is* coming home!" she exclaimed excitedly, the color ebbing from her cheeks.

"He is already here, Kate. He slept upstairs in his old room last night. I expect him in any minute."

"Here!—in this room!" She was on her feet in an instant, her face deathly pale, her whole frame shaking. Which way should she turn to escape? To meet him face to face would bring only excruciating pain. "Oh, why didn't you tell me, Uncle George!" she burst out. "I won't see him! I can't!—not now—not here! Let me go home—let me think! No—don't stop me!" and catching up her cape and parasol she was out the door and down the steps

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before he could call her back or even realize that she had gone.

Once on the pavement she looked nervously up and down the street, gathered her pretty skirts tight in her hand and with the fluttered flight of a scared bird darted across the park, dashed through her swinging gate, and so on up to her bedroom.

There she buried her face in Mammy Henny's lap and burst into an agony of tears.

While all this had been going on upstairs another equally important conference was taking place in Pawson's office below, where Harry at Pawson's request had gone to meet Gadgem and talk over certain plans for his uncle's future welfare. He had missed Kate by one of those trifling accidents which often determine the destiny of nations and of men. Had he, after attending to the business of the morning—(he had been down to Marsh Market with Todd for supplies)—mounted the steps to see his uncle instead of yielding to a sudden impulse to interview Pawson first and his uncle afterwards, he would have come upon Kate at the very moment she was pouring out her heart to St. George.

But no such fatality or stroke of good fortune—whatever the gods had in store for him—

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took place. On the contrary he proceeded calmly to carry out the details of a matter of the utmost importance to all concerned—one in which both Pawson and Gadgem were interested—(indeed he had come at Pawson's suggestion to discuss its details with the collector and himself):—all of which the Scribe promises in all honor to reveal to his readers before the whole of this story is told.

Harry walked straight up to Gadgem:

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Gadgem," he said in his manly, friendly way. "You have been very good to my uncle, and I want to thank you both for him and for myself," and he shook the little man's hand heartily.

Gadgem blushed. St. George's democracy he could understand; but why this aristocrat—outcast as he had once been, but now again in favor—why this young prince, the heir to Moorlands and the first young blood of his time, should treat him as an equal, puzzled him; and yet, somehow, his heart warmed to him as he read his sincerity in his eyes and voice.

"Thank you, sir—thank you very much, sir," rejoined Gadgem, with a folding-camp-stool-movement, his back bent at right angles with his legs. "I really don't deserve it, sir. Mr. Temple is an *extraordinary* man, sir; the

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most *extraordinary* man I have ever met, sir. Give you the shirt off his back, sir, and go *naked* himself."

"Yes, he gave it to me," laughed Harry, greatly amused at the collector's effusive manner. He had never seen this side of Gadgem. "That, of course, you know all about—you paid the bills, I believe."

"*Precisely* so, sir." He had lengthened out now with a spiral-spring, cork-screw twist in his body, his index finger serving as point. "Paid every one of them. He never cared, sir—he *gloried* in it—*gloried* in being a pauper. *Unaccountable*, Mr. Rutter—*enormously* unaccountable. Never heard of such a case; never *will* hear of such a case. So what was to be done, sir? Just what I may state is being done this minute over our heads *upstairs*": and out went the index finger. "Rest and *recuperation*, sir—a slow—a very slow use of *available* assets until new and *further available* assets could become visible. And they are here, sir—have *arrived*. You may have heard, of course, of the Patapsco where Mr. Temple kept the *largest* part of his fortune."

"No, except that it about ruined everybody who had anything to do with it."

"Then you have heard nothing of the *resus-*

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citation!” cried Gadgem, all his fingers opened like a fan, his eyebrows arched to the roots of his hair. “You *surprise* me! And you are really ignorant of the *phœnix*-like way in which it has *risen* from its ashes? I said *risen*, sir, because it is now but a dim speck in the financial sky. Nor the appointment of Mr. John Gorsuch as manager, ably backed by your *distinguished* father—the setting of the bird upon its legs—I’m speaking of the burnt bird, sir, the *phœnix*. I’m quite sure it was a bird. Nor the payment on the first of the ensuing month of some eighty per cent of the amounts due the *original* depositors and another twenty per cent in one year thereafter. The cancelling of the mortgage which your most *benevolent* and *honorable* father bought, and the sly trick of Gorsuch—letting Fogbin, who never turned up, become the sham tenant—and the joy —”

“Hold on, Mr. Gadgem—I’m not good at figures. Give me that over again and speak slower. Am I to understand that the bank will pay back to my uncle, within a day or so, three-quarters of the money they stole from him?”

“*Stole*, sir!” chided Gadgem, his outstretched fore-finger wig-wagging a Fie! Fie! gesture of disapproval. “*Stole* is not a pretty word—actionable, sir—*dangerously* actionable—a ques-

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tion of the watch-house, and, if I might be permitted to say—a bit of *cold* lead. Perhaps you will allow me to suggest the word ‘*manipulated*,’ sir—the money the bank *manipulated* from your confiding and inexperienced uncle—that is safer and it is equally *expressive*. He! He!”

“Well, will he get the money?” cried Harry, his face lighting up, his interest in the outcome outweighing his amusement over Gadgem’s antics and expressions.

“He *will*, sir,” rejoined Gadgem decisively.

“And you are so sure of it that you would be willing to advance one-half the amount if the account was turned over to you this minute?” cried Harry eagerly.

“No, sir—not one-half—*all* of it—less a *trifling* commission for my services of say one per cent. When you say ‘this minute,’ sir, I must reply that the brevity of the area of action becomes a trifle *acute*; yes, *alarmingly* acute. I haven’t the money myself, sir—that is, not about my person—but I can get it in an hour, sir—in less time, if Mr. Temple is willing. That was my purpose in coming here, sir—that was why Mr. Pawson sent for me, sir; and it is but fair to say that you can thank your *distinguished* father for it all, sir—he has worked night and day to do it. Colo-

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nel Rutter has taken over—so I am *informed*—I'm not sure, but I am *informed*—taken over a lot of the securities himself so that he *could* do it. Another *extraordinary* combination, if you will permit me to say so—I refer to your father—a man who will show you his door one minute and open his pocketbook and his best bottle of wine for you the next,” and he plunged himself down in his seat with so determined a gesture that it left no question on Harry's mind that he intended sitting it out until daylight should there be the faintest possibility of his financial proposition being accepted.

Harry walked to the window and gazed out on the trees. There was no doubt now that Mr. Temple was once more on his feet. “Uncle George will go now to Moorlands,” he said decisively, in a low tone, speaking to himself, his heart swelling with pride at this fresh evidence of his father's high sense of honor—then he wheeled and addressed the attorney:

“Shall I tell Mr. Temple this news, about the Patapsco Bank, Mr. Pawson?”

“Yes, if you think best, Mr. Rutter. And I have another piece of good news. This please do not tell Mr. Temple, not yet—not until it is definitely settled. That old suit in Chancery has been decided, or will be, so I learned this

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morning, and decided in favor of the heir. You may not have heard of it before, Gadgem," and he turned to the collector, "but it is one of old General Dorsey Temple's left-overs. It has been in the courts now some forty years. When this decision is made binding," here he again faced Harry, "Mr. Temple comes in for a considerable share."

Gadgem jumped to his feet and snapped his fingers rapidly. Had he sat on a tack his rebound could not have been more sudden. This last was news to him.

"*Shorn* lamb, sir!" he cried gleefully, rubbing his palms together, his body tied into a double bow-knot. "Gentle breezes; bread upon the waters! By jiminy, Mr. Rutter, if Mr. Temple could be born again—figuratively, sir—and I could walk in upon him as I once did, and find him at breakfast surrounded by all his comforts with Todd waiting upon him—a very good nigger is Todd, sir—an *exceptionally* good nigger—I'd—I'd—damn me, Mr. Rutter, I'd—well, sir, there's no word—but John Gadgem, sir—well, I'll be damned if he wouldn't—" and he began skipping about the room, both feet in the air, as if he was a boy of twenty instead of a thin, shambling, badly put together bill collector in an ill-fitting brown coat, a hat much the worse for wear,

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and a red cotton handkerchief addicted to weekly ablutions.

As for Harry, the glad news had cleared out wide spaces before him, such as he had not looked through in years; leafy vistas, with glimpses of sunlit meadows; shadow-flecked paths leading to manor-houses with summer skies beyond. He, too, was on his feet, walking restlessly up and down.

Pawson and Gadgem again put their heads together, Harry stopping to listen. Such expressions as "Certainly," "I think I can": "Yes, of course it was there when I was last in his place," "Better see him first," caught his ear.

At last he could stand it no longer. Dr. Teackle or no Dr. Teackle, he would go upstairs, open the door softly, and if his uncle was awake whisper the good news in his ear. If anybody had whispered any such similar good news in his ear on any one of the weary nights he had lain awake waiting for the dawn, or at any time of the day when he sat his horse, his rifle across the pommel, it would have made another man of him.

If his uncle was awake!

He was not only awake, but he was very much alive.

"I've got a great piece of news for you, Uncle

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George!" Harry shouted in a rollicking tone, his joy increasing as he noted his uncle's renewed strength.

"So have I got a great piece of news for you!" was shouted back. "Come in, you young rascal, and shut that door behind you. She isn't going to marry Willits. Thrown him over—don't want him—don't love him—can't love him—never did love him! She's just told me so. Whoop—hurrah!! Dance, you dog, before I throw this chair at you!!" ~

There are some moments in a man's life when all language fails;—pantomime moments, when one stares and tries to speak and stares again. They were both at it—St. George waiting until Harry should explode, and Harry trying to get his breath, the earth opening under him, the skies falling all about his head.

"She told you so! When?" he gasped.

"Two minutes ago—you've just missed her! Where the devil have you been? Why didn't you come in before?"

"Kate here—two minutes ago—what will I do?" Had he found himself at sea in an open boat with both oars adrift he could not have been more helpless.

"*Do!* Catch her before she gets home! Quick!—just as you are—sailor clothes and all!"

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“But how will I know if——?”

“You don’t have to know! Away with you, I tell you!”

And away he went—and if you will believe it, dear reader—without even a whisper in his uncle’s ears of the good news he had come to tell.

CHAPTER XXX

BEN let him in.

He came as an apparition, the old butler balancing the door in his hand, as if undecided what to do, trying to account for the change in the young man's appearance—the width of shoulders, the rough clothes, and the determined glance of his eye.

“Fo' Gawd, it's Marse Harry!” was all he said when he could get his mouth open.

“Yes, Ben. Go and tell your mistress I am here,” and he brushed past him and pushed back the drawing-room door. Once inside, he crossed to the mantel and stood with his back to the hearth, his sailor's cap in his hand, his eyes fixed on the door he had just closed behind him. Through it would come the beginning or the end of his life. Ben's noiseless entrance and exit a moment after, with his mistress's message, neither raised nor depressed his hopes. He had known all along she would not refuse to see him: what would come after was the wall that loomed up.

She had not hesitated, nor did she keep him waiting. Her eyes were still red with weeping,

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her hair partly dishevelled, when Ben found her—but she did not seem to care. Nor was she frightened—nor eager. She just lifted her cheek from Mammy Henny's caressing hand—pushed back the hair from her face with a movement as if she was trying to collect her thoughts, and without rising from her knees heard Ben's message to the end. Then she answered calmly:

"Did you say Mr. Harry Rutter, Ben? Tell him I'll be down in a moment."

She entered with that same graceful movement which he loved so well—her head up, her face turned frankly toward him, one hand extended in welcome.

"Uncle George told me you were back, Harry. It was very good of you to come," and sank on the sofa.

It had been but a few steps to him—the space between the open door and the hearth rug on which he stood—and it had taken her but a few seconds to cross it, but in that brief interval the heavens had opened above her. The old Harry was there—the smile—the flash in the eyes—the joy of seeing her—the quick movement of his hand in gracious salute; then there had followed a sense of his strength, of the calm poise of his body, of the clearness of his skin. She

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saw, too, how much handsomer he had grown, —and noted the rough sailor's clothes. How well they fitted his robust frame! And the clear, calm eyes and finely cut features—no shrinking from responsibility in that face; no faltering—the old ideal of her early love and the new ideal of her sailor boy—the one Richard's voice had conjured—welded into one personality!

"I heard you had just been in to see Uncle George, Kate, and I tried to overtake you."

Not much: nothing in fact. Playwriters tell us that the dramatic situation is the thing, and that the spoken word is as unimportant to the play as the foot-lights—except as a means of illuminating the situation.

"Yes—I have just left him, Harry. Uncle George looks very badly—don't you think so? Is there anything very serious the matter? I sent Ben to Dr. Teackle's, but he was not in his office."

He had moved up a chair and sat devouring every vibration of her lips, every glance of her wondrous eyes—all the little movements of her beautiful body—her dress—the way the stray strands of hair had escaped to her shoulders. His Kate!—and yet he dare not touch her!

"No, he is not ill. He took a severe cold and only needs rest and a little care. I am glad you

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went and—" then the pent-up flood broke loose. "Are you glad to see me, Kate?"

"I am always glad to see you, Harry—and you look so well. It has been nearly three years, hasn't it?" Her calmness was maddening; she spoke as if she was reciting a part in which she had no personal interest.

"I don't know—I haven't counted—not that way. I have lain awake too many nights and suffered too much to count by years. I count by——"

She raised her hand in protest: "Don't, Harry—please don't. All the suffering has not been yours!" The impersonal tone was gone—there was a note of agony in her voice.

His manner softened: "Don't think I blame you, Kate. I love you too much to blame you—you did right. The suffering has only done me good—I am a different man from the one you once knew. I see life with a wider vision. I know what it is to be hungry; I know, too, what it is to earn the bread that has kept me alive. I came home to look after Uncle George. When I go back I want to take him with me. I won't count the years nor all the suffering I have gone through if I can pay him back what I owe him. He stood by me when everybody else deserted me."

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She winced a little at the thrust, as if he had touched some sore spot, sending a shiver of pain through her frame, but she did not defend herself.

"You mustn't take him away, Harry—leave Uncle George to me," not as if she demanded it—more as if she was stating a fact.

"Why not? He will be another man out in Brazil—and he can live there like a gentleman on what he will have left—so Pawson thinks."

"Because I love him dearly—and when he is gone I have nobody left," she answered in a hopeless tone.

Harry hesitated, then he asked: "And so what Uncle George told me about Mr. Willits is true?"

Kate looked at him furtively, as if afraid to read his thoughts, and for reply bowed her head in assent.

"Didn't he love you enough?" There was a certain reproach in his tone, as if no one could love this woman enough to satisfy her.

"Yes."

"What was the matter then? Was it—" He stopped—his eagerness had led him onto dangerous, if not discourteous, grounds. "No, you needn't answer—forgive me for asking—I had no right. I am not myself, Kate—I didn't mean to——"

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“Yes, I’ll tell you. I told Uncle George. I didn’t like him well enough—that’s all.” All this time she was looking him calmly in the face. If she had done anything to be ashamed of she did not intend to conceal it from her former lover.

“And will Uncle George take his place now that he’s gone? Do you ever know your own heart, Kate?” There was no bitterness in his question. Her frankness had disarmed him of that. It was more in the nature of an inquiry, as if he was probing for something on which he could build a hope.

For a brief instant she made no answer; then she said slowly and with a certain positiveness:

“If I had I would have saved myself and you a great deal of misery.”

“And Langdon Willits?”

“No, he cannot complain—he does not—I promised him nothing. But I have been so beaten about, and I have tried so hard to do right; and it has all crumbled to pieces. As for you and me, Harry, let us both forget that we have ever had any differences. I can’t bear to think that whenever you come home we must avoid each other. We were friends once—let us be friends again. It was very kind of you to come. I’m glad you didn’t wait. Don’t be bitter in your heart toward me.”

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Harry left his chair and settled down on the sofa beside her, and in pleading, tender tones said:

“Kate—when was I ever bitter toward you in my heart? Look at me! Do you realize how I love you?—Do you know it sets me half crazy to hear you talk like that? I haven’t come here to-day to reproach you—I have come to do what I can to help you, if you want my help. I told you the last time we talked in the park that I wouldn’t stay in Kennedy Square a day longer even if you begged me to. That is over now; I’ll do now anything you wish me to do; I’ll go or I’ll stay. I love you too much to do anything else.”

“No, you don’t love me!—you can’t love me! I wouldn’t let you love me after all the misery I have caused you! I didn’t know how much until I began to suffer myself and saw Mr. Willits suffer. I am not worthy of any man’s love. I will never trust myself again—I can only try to be to the men about me as Uncle George is to every one. Oh, Harry!—Harry!—Why was I born this way—headstrong—wilful—never satisfied? Why am I different from the other women?”

He tried to take her hand, but she drew it away.

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“No!—not that!—not that! Let us be just as we were when—Just as we used to be. Sit over there where I can see you better and watch your face as you talk. Tell me all you have done—what you have seen and what sort of places you have been in. We heard from you through——”

He squared his shoulders and faced her, his voice ringing clear, his eyes flashing: something of the old Dutch admiral was in his face.

“Kate—I will have none of it! Don’t talk such nonsense to me; I won’t listen. If you don’t know your own heart, I know mine; you’ve *got* to love me!—you *must* love me! Look at me. In all the years I have been away from you I have lived the life you would have me live—every request you ever made of me I have carried out. I did this knowing you would never be my wife and you would be Willits’s! I did it because you were my Madonna and my religion and I loved the soul of you and lived for you as men live to please the God they have never seen. There were days and nights when I never expected to see you or any one else whom I loved again—but you never failed—your light never went out in my heart. Don’t you see now why you’ve got to love me? What was it you loved in me once that I haven’t got now? How

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am I different? What do I lack? Look into my eyes—close—deep down—read my heart! Never, as God is my judge, have I done a thing since I last kissed your forehead, that you would have been ashamed of. Do you think, now that you are free, that I am going back without you? I am not that kind of a man.”

She half started from her seat: “Harry!” she cried in a helpless tone—“you do not know what you are saying—you must not——”

He leaned over and took both her hands firmly in his own.

“Look at me! Tell me the truth—as you would to your God! Do you love me?”

She made an effort to withdraw her hands, then she sank back.

“I—I—don’t know——” she murmured.

“*You do*—search again—way down in your heart. Go over every day we have lived—when we were children and played together—all that horror at Moorlands when I shot Willits—the night of Mrs. Cheston’s ball when I was drunk—all the hours I have held you in my arms, my lips to yours— All of it—every hour of it—balance one against the other. Think of your loneliness—not mine—yours—and then tell me you do not know! *You do* know! Oh, my God, Kate!—you must love me! What

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else would you want a man to do for you that I have not done? ”

He stretched out his arms, but she sprang to her feet and put out her palms as a barrier.

“No. Let me tell you something. We must have no more misunderstandings—you must be sure—I must be sure. I have no right to take your heart in my hands again. It is I who have broken my faith with you, not you with me. I was truly your wife when I promised you here on the sofa that last time. I knew then that you would, perhaps, lose your head again, and yet I loved you so much that I could not give you up. Then came the night of your father’s ball and all the misery, and I was a coward and shut myself up instead of keeping my arms around you and holding you up to the best that was in you, just as Uncle George begged me to do. And when your father turned against you and drove you from your home, all because you had tried to defend me from insult, I saw only the disgrace and did not see the man behind it; and then you went away and I stretched out my arms for you to come back to me and only your words echoed in my ears that you would never come back to me until you were satisfied with yourself. Then I gave up and argued it out and said it was all over——”

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He had left his seat and at every sentence had tried to take her in his arms, but she kept her palms toward him.

"No, don't touch me! You *shall* hear me out; I must empty all my heart! I was lonely and heart-sore and driven half wild with doubts at what people said, my father worse than all of them. And Mr. Willits was kind and always at my beck and call—and so thoughtful and attentive—and I tried and tried—but I couldn't. I always had you before me—and you haunted me day and night, and sometimes when he would come in that door I used to start, hoping it might be you."

"It *is* me, my darling!" he cried, springing toward her. "I don't want to hear any more—I must—I will——"

"But you *shall*! There *is* something more. It went on and on and I got so that I did not care, and one day I thought I would give him my promise and the next day all my soul rebelled against it and it was that way until one night Mr. Horn read aloud a story—and it all came over me and I saw everything plain as if it had been on a stage, and myself and you and Mr. Willits—and what it meant—and what would come of it—and he walked home with me and I told him frankly, and I have never seen him since.

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And now here is the last and you must hear it out. There is not a word I have said to him which I would recall—not a thing I am ashamed of. Your lips were the last that touched my own. There, my darling, it is all told. I love you with my whole heart and soul and mind and body—I have never loved anybody else—I have tried and tried and couldn't. I am so tired of thinking for myself,—so tired,—so tired. Take me and do with me as you will!”

Again the plot is too strong for the dialogue. He had her fast in his arms before her confession was finished. Then the two sank on the sofa where she lay sobbing her heart out, he crooning over her—patting her cheeks, kissing away the tears from her eyelids; smoothing the strands of her hair with his strong, firm fingers. It was his Kate that lay in his grasp—close—tightly pressed—her heart beating against his, her warm, throbbing body next his own, her heart swept of every doubt and care, all her will gone.

As she grew quiet she stretched up her hand, touching his cheek as if to reassure herself that it was really her lover. Yes! It was Harry—*her* Harry—Harry who was dead and is alive again—to whom she had stripped her soul naked—and who still trusted and loved her.

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A little later she loosened herself from his embrace and taking his face in her small, white hands, looked, long and earnestly into his eyes, smoothing back the hair from his brow as she used to do; kissing him on the forehead, on each eyelid, and then on the mouth—one of their old-time caresses. Still remembering the old days, she threw back his coat and let her hands wander over his full-corded throat and chest and arms. How big and strong he had become! and how handsome he had grown—the boy merged into the man. And that other something!—(and another and stronger thrill shot through her)—that other something which seemed to flow out of him;—that dominating force that betokened leadership, compelling her to follow—not the imperiousness of his father, brooking no opposition no matter at what cost, but the leadership of experience, courage, and self-reliance.

With this the sense of possession swept over her. He was all her own and for ever! A man to lean upon; a man to be proud of; one who would listen and understand: to whom she could surrender her last stronghold—her will. And the comfort of it all; the rest, the quiet, the assurance of everlasting peace: she who had been so torn and buffeted and heart-sore.

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For many minutes she lay still from sheer happiness, thrilled by the warmth and pressure of his strong arms. At last, when another thought could squeeze itself into her mind, she said: "Won't Uncle George be glad, Harry?"

"Yes," he answered, releasing her just far enough to look into her eyes. "It will make him well. You made him very happy this morning. His troubles are over, I hear—he's going to get a lot of his money back."

"Oh, I'm so glad. And will we take him with us?" she asked wonderingly, smoothing back his hair as she spoke.

"Take him where, darling?" he laughed.

"To where we are going— No, you needn't laugh—I mean it. I don't care where we go," and she looked at him intently. "I'll go with you anywhere in the world you say, and I'll start to-morrow."

He caught her again in his arms, kissed her for the hundredth time, and then, suddenly relaxing his hold, asked in assumed alarm: "And what about your father? What do you think he will say? He always thought me a madcap scapegrace—didn't he?" The memory brought up no regret. He didn't care a rap what the Honorable Prim thought of him.

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"Yes—he thinks so now," she echoed, wondering how anybody could have formed any such ideas of her Harry.

"Well, he will get over it when I talk with him about his coffee people. Some of his agents out there want looking after."

"Oh!—how lovely, my precious; talking coffee will be much pleasanter than talking me!—and yet we have got to do it somehow when he comes home."

And down went her head again, she nestling the closer as if terrified at the thought of the impending meeting; then another kiss followed—dozens of them—neither of them keeping count, and then—and then—

And then— Ben tapped gently and announced that dinner was served, and Harry stared at the moon-faced dial and saw that it was long after two o'clock, and wondered what in the world had become of the four hours that had passed since he had rushed down from his uncle's and into Kate's arms.

And so we will leave them—playing house-keeping—Harry pulling out her chair, she spreading her dainty skirts and saying "Thank you, Mr. Rutter," and Ben with his face in so broad a grin that it got set that way—Aunt

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Dinah, the cook, having to ask him three times "Was he gwineter hab a fit" before he could answer by reason of the chuckle which was suffocating him.

And now as we must close the door for a brief space on the happy couple—never so happy in all their lives—it will be just as well for us to find out what the mischief is going on at the club—for there is something going on—and that of unusual importance.

Everybody is out on the front steps. Old Bowdoin is craning his short neck, and Judge Pancoast is saying that it is impossible and then instantly changing his mind, saying: "By jove it is!"—and Richard Horn and Warfield and Murdoch are leaning over the balcony rail still unconvinced and old Harding is pounding his fat thigh with his pudgy hand in ill-concealed delight.

Yes—there is no doubt of it—hasn't been any doubt of it since the judge shouted out the glad tidings which emptied every chair in the club: Across the park, beyond the rickety, vine-covered fence and close beside the Temple Mansion, stands a four-in-hand, the afternoon sun flashing from the silver mountings of the harness and glinting on the polished body and

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wheels of the coach. Then a crack of the whip, a wind of the horn, and they are off—the leaders stretching the traces, two men on the box, two grooms in the rear. Hurrah! Well, by thunder, who would have believed it—that's Temple inside on the back seat! "There he is waving his hand and Todd is with him. And yes! Why of course it's Rutter! See him clear that curb! Not a man in this county can drive like that but Talbot."

Round they come—the colonel straight as a whip—dusty-brown overcoat, flowers in his buttonhole—bell-crowned hat, brown driving gloves—perfectly appointed, even if he is a trifle pale and half blind. More horn—a long joyous note now, as if they were heralding the peace of the world, the colonel bowing like a grand duke as he passes the assembled crowd—a gathering of the reins together, a sudden pull-up at Seymours', everybody on the front porch—Kate peeping over Harry's shoulder—and last and best of all, St. George's cheery voice ringing out:

"Where are you two sweethearts!" Not a weak note anywhere; regular fog-horn of a voice blown to help shipwrecked mariners.

"All aboard for Moorlands, you turtle-doves—never mind your clothes, Kate—nor you either,

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Harry. Your father will send for them later. Up with you."

"All true, Harry," called back the colonel from the top of the coach (nobody alighted but the grooms—there wasn't time—) "Your mother wouldn't wait another hour and sent me for you, and Teackle said St. George could go, and we bundled him up and brought him along, and you are all going to stay a month. No, don't wait a minute, Kate; I want to get home before dark. One of my men will be in with the carryall and bring out your mammy and your clothes and whatever you want. Your father is away, I hear, and so nobody will miss you. Get your heavy driving coat, my dear; I brought one of mine in for Harry—it will be cold before we get home. Matthew, your eyes are better than mine, get down and see what the devil is the matter with that horse. No, it's all right—the check-rein bothered him."

And so ended the day that had been so happily begun, and the night was no less joyful with the mother's arms about her beloved boy and Kate on a stool beside her and Talbot and St. George deep in certain vintages—or perhaps certain vintages deep in Talbot and St. George—especially that particular and peculiar old Madeira of 1800, which his friend Mr. Jefferson

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had sent him from Monticello, and which was never served except to some such distinguished guest as his highly esteemed and well-beloved friend of many years, St. George Wilmot Temple of Kennedy Square.

CHAPTER XXXI

IT would be delightful to describe the happy days at Moorlands during St. George's convalescence, when the love-life of Harry and Kate was one long, uninterrupted, joyous dream. When mother, father, and son were again united—what a meeting was that, once she got her arms around her son's neck and held him close and wept her heart out in thankfulness!—and the life of the old-time past was revived—a life softened and made restful and kept glad by the lessons all had learned. And it would be more delightful still to carry the record of these charming hours far into the summer had not St. George, eager to be under his own roof in Kennedy Square, declared he could stay no longer.

Not that his welcome had grown less warm. He and his host had long since unravelled all their difficulties, the last knot having been cut the afternoon the colonel, urged on by Harry's mother—his disappointment over his son's coldness set at rest by her pleadings—had driven into town for Harry in his coach, as has been

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said, and swept the whole party, including St. George, out to Moorlands.

Various unrelated causes had brought about this much-to-be-desired result, the most important being the news of the bank's revival, which Harry, in his mad haste to overtake Kate, had forgotten to tell his uncle, and which St. George learned half an hour later from Pawson, together with a full account of what the colonel had done to bring about the happy result—a bit of information which so affected Temple that, when the coach with the colonel on the box had whirled up, he, weak as he was, had struggled to the front door, both hands held out, in welcome.

“Talbot—old fellow,” he had said with a tear in his voice, “I have misunderstood you and I beg your pardon. You’ve behaved like a man, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart!”

At which the stern old aristocrat had replied, as he took St. George’s two hands in his: “Let us forget all about it, St. George. I made a damned fool of myself. We all get too cocky sometimes.”

Then there had followed—the colonel listening with bated breath—St. George’s account of Kate’s confession and Harry’s sudden exit, Rutter’s face brightening as it had not done for

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years when he learned that Harry had not yet returned from the Seymours', the day's joy being capped by the arrival of Dr. Teackle, who had given his permission with an "All right—the afternoon is fine and the air will do Mr. Temple a world of good," and so St. George was bundled up and the reader knows the rest.

Later on—at Moorlands of course—the colonel, whose eyes were getting better by the day and Gorsuch, whose face was now one round continuous smile, got to work, and had a heart-to-heart—or rather a pocket-to-pocket talk—which was quite different in those days from what it would be now—after which both Kate and Harry threw to the winds all thoughts of Rio and the country contiguous thereto, and determined instead to settle down at Moorlands. And then a great big iron door sunk in a brick vault was swung wide and certain leather-bound books were brought out—and particularly a sum of money which Harry duly handed over to Pawson the next time he drove to town—(twice a week now)—and which, when recounted, balanced to a cent the total of the bills which Pawson had paid three years before, with interest added, a list of which the attorney still kept in his private drawer with certain other valuable papers tied with red tape, marked "St. G. W. T." And

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still later on—within a week—there had come the news of the final settlement of the long-disputed lawsuit with St. George as principal residuary legatee—and so our long-suffering hero was once more placed upon his financial legs: the only way he could have been placed upon them or would have been placed upon them—a fact very well known to every one who had tried to help him, his philosophy being that one dollar borrowed is two dollars owed—the difference being a man's self-respect.

And it is truly marvellous what this change in his fortunes accomplished. His slack body rounded out; his sunken cheeks plumped up until every crease and crack were gone, his color regained its freshness, his eyes their brilliancy; his legs took on their old-time spring and lightness—and a wonderful pair of stand-bys, or stand-ups, or stand-arounds they were as legs go—that is legs of a man of fifty-five.

And they were never idle, these legs: there was no sitting cross-legged in a chair for St. George: he was not constructed along those lines. Hardly a week had passed before he had them across Spitfire's mate; had ridden to hounds; danced a minuet with Harry and Kate; walked half-way to Kennedy Square and back—they thought he was going to walk all the

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way and headed him off just in time ; and best of all—(and this is worthy of special mention)—had slipped them into the lower section of a suit of clothes—and these his own, although he had not yet paid for them—the colonel having liquidated their cost. These trousers, it is just as well to state, had arrived months before from Poole, along with a suit of Rutter's, and the colonel had forwarded a draft for the whole amount without examining the contents, until Alec had called his attention to the absurd width of the legs—and the ridiculous spread of the seat. My Lord of Moorlands, after the scene in the Temple Mansion, dared not send them in to St. George, and they had accordingly lain ever since on top of his wardrobe with Alec as chief of the Moth Department. St. George, on his arrival, found them folded carefully and placed on a chair—Todd chief valet. Whereupon there had been a good-natured row when our man of fashion appeared at breakfast rigged out in all his finery, everybody clapping their hands and saying how handsome he looked—St. George in reply denouncing Talbot as a brigand of a Brummel who had stolen his clothes, tried to wear them, and then when out of fashion thrown them back on his hands.

All these, and a thousand other delightful

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things, it would, I say, be eminently worth while to dilate upon—(including a series of whoops and hand-springs which Todd threw against the rear wall of the big kitchen five seconds after Alec had told him of the discomfiture of “dat red-haided gemman,” and of Marse Harry’s good fortune)—were it not that certain mysterious happenings are taking place inside and out of the Temple house in Kennedy Square—happenings exciting universal comment, and of such transcendent importance that the Scribe is compelled, much against his will—for the present installment is entirely too short—to confine their telling to a special chapter.

CHAPTER XXXII

FOR some time back, then be it said, various strollers unfamiliar with the neighbors or the neighborhood of Kennedy Square, poor benighted folk who knew nothing of the events set down in the preceding chapters, had nodded knowingly to each other or shaken their pates deprecatingly over the passing of "another old landmark."

Some of these had gone so far as to say that the cause could be found in the fact that Lawyer Temple had run through what little money his father and grandmother had left him; additional wise-acres were of the opinion that some out-of-town folks had bought the place and were trying to prop it up so it wouldn't tumble into the street, while one, more facetious than the others, had claimed that it was no wonder it was falling down, since the only new thing Temple had put upon it was a heavy mortgage.

The immediate neighbors, however,—the friends of the house—had smiled and passed on. They had no such forebodings. On the contrary, nothing so diverting—nothing so enchanting—had happened around Kennedy Square in years.

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In fact, when one of these humorists began speaking about it, every listener heard the story in a broad grin. Some of the more hilarious even nudged each other in the waistcoats and ordered another round of toddies—for two or three, or even five, if there were that number of enthusiasts about the club tables. When they were asked what it was all about they invariably shook their heads, winked, and kept still—that is, if the question were put by some one outside the magic circle of Kennedy Square.

All the general public knew was that men with bricks in hods had been seen staggering up the old staircase with its spindle banisters and mahogany rail; that additional operatives had been discovered clinging to the slanting roof long enough to pass up to further experts grouped about the chimneys small rolls of tin and big bundles of shingles; that plasterers in white caps and aprons, with mortar-boards in one hand and trowels in the other, had been seen chinking up cracks; while any number of painters, carpenters, and locksmiths were working away for dear life all over the place from Aunt Jemima's kitchen to Todd's bunk under the roof.

In addition to all this, curious wagons had been seen to back up to the curb, from which had been taken various odd-looking bundles; these

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were laid on the dining-room floor, a collection of paint pots, brushes, and wads of putty being pushed aside to give them room—and with some haste too, for every one seemed to be working overtime.

As to what went on inside the mansion itself not the most inquisitive could fathom: no one being permitted to peer even into Pawson's office, where so large a collection of household goods and gods were sprawled, heaped, and hung, that it looked as if there had been a fire in the neighborhood, and this room the only shelter for miles around.

Even Pawson's law books were completely hidden by the overflow and so were the tables, chairs, and shelves, together with the two wide window-sills.

Nor did it seem to matter very much to the young attorney as to how or at what hours of the day or night these several articles arrived. Often quite late in the evening—and this happened more than once—an old fellow, pinched and wheezy, would sneak in, uncover a mysterious object wrapped in a square of stringy calico, fumble in his pocket for a scrap of paper, put his name at the bottom of it, and sneak out again, five, ten, or twenty dollars better off. Once, as late as eleven o'clock, a fattish gentleman with a hooked

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nose and a positive dialect, assisted another stout member of his race to slide a very large object from out of the tail of a cart. Whereupon there had been an interchange of wisps of paper between Pawson and the fatter of the two men, the late visitors bowing and smiling until they reached a street lantern, where they divided a roll of bank-notes between them.

And the delight that Pawson and Gadgem took in it all!—assorting, verifying, checking off—slapping each other's backs in glee when some doubtful find was made certain, and growing even more excited on the days when Harry and Kate would drive or ride in from Moorlands—almost every day of late—tie the horse and carryall, or both saddle-horses, to St. George's tree-boxes, and at once buckle on their armor.

This, rendered into common prose, meant that Harry, after a prolonged consultation with Pawson and Gadgem, would shed his outer coat, the spring being now far advanced, blossoms out and the weather warm—and that Kate would tuck her petticoats clear of her dear little feet and go pattering round, her sleeves rolled up as far as they would go, her beautiful arms bare almost to her shoulders—her hair smothered in a brown barege veil to keep out the dust—the most bewitching parlor-maid you or anybody

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else ever laid eyes on. Then would follow such a carrying up of full baskets and carrying down of empty ones; such a spreading of carpets and rugs; such an arranging of china and glass; such a placing of andirons, fenders, shovels, tongs, and bellows; hanging of pictures, curtains, and mirrors—old and new; moving in of sofas, chairs, and rockers; making up of beds with fluted frills on the pillows—a silk patch-work quilt on St. George's bed and cotton counterpanes for Jemima and Todd!

And the secrecy maintained by everybody! Pawson might have been stone deaf and entirely blind for all the information you could twist out of him—and a lot of people tried. And as to Gadgem—the dumbest oyster in Cherrystone Creek was a veritable magpie when it came to his giving the precise reason why the Temple Mansion was being restored from top to bottom and why all its old furniture, fittings, and trappings—(brand-new ones when they couldn't be found in the pawn shops or elsewhere)—were being gathered together within its four walls. When anybody asked Kate—and plenty of people did—she would throw her head back and laugh so loud and so merrily and so musically, that you would have thought all the birds in Kennedy Square park were still welcoming the spring. When

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you asked Harry he would smile and wink and perhaps keep on whispering to Pawson or Gadgem, whose eyes were glued to a list which had its abiding place in Pawson's top drawer.

Outside of these four conspirators—yes, six—for both Todd and Jemima were in it, only a very few were aware of what was really being done. The colonel of course knew, and so did Harry's mother—and so did old Alec, who had to clap his hand over his mouth to keep from snickering out loud at the breakfast table when he accidentally overheard what was going on—an unpardonable offence—(not the listening, but the laughing). In fact everybody in the big house at Moorlands knew, for Alec spread it broadcast in the kitchen and cabins—everybody *except St. George*.

Not a word reached St. George—not a syllable. No one of the house servants would have spoiled the fun, and certainly no one of the great folks. It was only when his visit to Moorlands was over and he had driven into town and had walked up his own front steps, that the true situation in all its glory and brilliancy dawned upon him.

The polished knobs, knocker, and the perfect level and whiteness of the marble steps first caught his eye; then the door swung open and Jemima in white apron and bandanna stood

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bowing to the floor, Todd straight as a ramrod, in a new livery and a grin on his face that cut it in two, with Kate and Harry hidden behind them, suffocating from suppressed laughter.

“Why, you dear Jemima! Howdy—. . . Why, who the devil sent that old table back, Todd, and the hall rack and— What!” Here he entered the dining-room. Everything was as he remembered it in the old days. “Harry! Kate!—Why—” Then he broke down and dropped into a chair, his eyes still roaming around the room taking in every object, even the loving cup, which Mr. Kennedy had made a personal point of buying back from the French secretary, who was gracious enough to part with it when he learned the story of its enforced sale—each and every one of them—ready to spring forward from its place to welcome him!

“So this,” he stammered out—“is what you have kept me up at Moorlands for, is it? You never say a word to me—and— Oh, you children!—you children! Todd, did you ever see anything like it?—my guns—and the loving cup—and the clock, and— Come here, you two blessed things, and let me get my arms around you! Kiss me, Kate—and Harry, my son—give me your hand. No, don’t say a word—don’t mind me—I’m all knocked out and——”

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Down went his face in his hands and he in a heap in the chair; then he stiffened and gave a little shiver to his elbows in the effort to keep himself from going completely to pieces, and scrambled to his feet again, one arm around Kate's neck, his free hand in Harry's.

"Take me everywhere and show me everything. Todd, go and find Mr. Pawson and see if Mr. Gadgem is anywhere around; they've had something to do with this—" here his eyes took in Todd— "You damned scoundrel, who the devil rigged you out in that new suit?"

"Marse Harry done sont me to de tailor. See dem buttons?—but dey ain't nuthin' to what's on the top shelf—you'll bust yo'self wide open a-laughin', Marse George, when ye sees what's in dar—you gotter come wid me—please Mistis an' Marse Harry, you come too. Dis way——"

Todd was full to bursting. Had his grin been half an inch wider his ears would have dropped off.

"An' fore ye look at dem shelves der's an-nuder thing I gotter tell ye;—an' dat is dat the dogs—all fo' ob'em—is comin' in the mawnin'. Mister Floyd's coachman done tole me so," and with a jerk and a whoop, completely ignoring his master's exclamation of joy over the return of his beloved setters, the darky threw back the



“TAKE ME EVERYWHERE AND SHOW ME EVERYTHING”

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door of the little cubby-hole of a room where the Black Warrior and his brethren had once rested in peace, and pointed to a row of erect black bottles backed by another of recumbent ones.

“Look at dat wine, will ye, Marse George,” he shouted, “all racked up on dem shelves? Dat come f’om Mister Talbot Rutter wid dis yere cyard—” and he handed it out.

St. George reached over, took it from his hand, and read it aloud :

“With the compliments of an old friend, who sends you herewith a few bottles of the Jefferson and some Sercial and old Port—and a basket or two of Royal Brown Sherry—nothing like your own, but the best he could scare up.”

Soon the newly polished replated knocker began to get in its liveliest work: “Mrs. Richard Horn’s compliments, and would St. George be pleased to accept a basket of Maryland biscuit and a sallylunn just out of the oven.” Mrs. Bowdoin’s compliments with three brace of ducks—“a little late in the season, my dear St. George, but they are just up from Currytuck where Mr. Bowdoin has had extremely good luck—for Mr. Bowdoin.” “Mrs. Cheston’s congratulations, and would Mr. Temple do her the honor of placing on his sideboard an old Accomack County ham which her cook had

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baked that morning and which should have all the charm and flavor of the State which had given him birth—" and last, a huge basket of spring roses from Miss Virginia Clendenning, accompanied by a card bearing the inscription—"You don't deserve them, you renegade," and signed—"Your deserted and heart-broken sweet-heart." All of which were duly spread out on the sideboard, together with one lone bottle to which was attached an envelope.

Before the day was over half the club had called—Richard acting master of ceremonies—Kate and old Prim—(he seemed perfectly contented with the way everything had turned out)—doing the honors with St. George. Pawson had also put in an appearance and been publicly thanked—a mark of St. George's confidence and esteem which doubled his practice before the year was out, and Gadgem—

No, Gadgem did not put in an appearance. Gadgem got as far as the hall and looked in, and, seeing all the great people thronging about St. George, would have sneaked out again to await some more favorable occasion had not Harry's sharp eyes discovered the top of his scraggly head over the shoulders of some others, and darted towards him, and when he couldn't be made to budge, had beckoned to St. George,

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who came on a run and shook Gadgem's hand so heartily and thanked him in so loud a voice —(everybody in the hall heard him) —that he could only sputter—"Didn't do a thing, sir—no, sir—and if I—" and then, overwhelmed, shot out of the door and down the steps and into Pawson's office where he stood panting, saying to himself—"I'll be tuckered if I ain't happier than I—yes—by Jingo, I am. *Jimminy-Crimminy*, what a man he is!"

And so the day passed and the night came and the neighbors took their leave, and Harry escorted Kate back to Seymours' and the tired knocker gave out and fell asleep, and at last Todd said good-night and stole down to Jemima, and St. George found himself once more in his easy chair, his head in his hand, his eyes fixed on the dead coals of a past fire.

As the echo of Todd's steps faded away and he began to realize that he was alone, there crept over him for the first time in years the comforting sense that he was once more under his own roof—his again and all that it covered—all that he loved; even his beloved dogs. He left his chair and with a quick indrawing of his breath, as if he had just sniffed the air from some open sea, stretched himself to his full height. There he stood looking about him,

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his shapely fingers patting his chest; his eyes wandering over the room, first with a sweeping glance, and then resting on each separate object as it nodded to him under the glow of the candles.

He had come into his possessions once more. Not that the very belongings made so much difference as his sense of pride in their ownership. They had, too, in a certain way regained for him his freedom—freedom to go and come and do as he pleased untrammelled by make-shifts and humiliating exposures and concealments. Best of all, they had given him back his courage, bracing the inner man, strengthening his beliefs in his traditions and in the things that his race and blood stood for.

Then as a flash of lightning reveals from out black darkness the recurrent waves of a troubled sea, there rushed over him the roll and surge of the events which had led up to his rehabilitation. Suddenly a feeling of intense humiliation and profound gratitude swept through him. He raised his arms, covered his face with his hands, and stood swaying; forcing back his tears; muttering to himself: “How good they have been—how good, how good! All mine once more—wonderful—wonderful!” With a resolute bracing of his shoulders and a brave lift

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of his chin, he began a tour of the room, stopping before each one of his beloved heirlooms and treasures—his precious gun that Gadgem had given up—(the collector coveted it badly as a souvenir, and got it the next day from St. George, with his compliments)—the famous silver loving cup with an extra polish Kirk had given it; his punch bowl—scarf rings and knick-knacks and the furniture and hangings of various kinds. At last he reached the sideboard, and bending over reread the several cards affixed to the different donations—Mrs. Cheston's, Mrs. Horn's, Miss Clendenning's, and the others. His eye now fell on the lone bottle—this he had not heretofore noticed—and the note bearing Mr. Kennedy's signature. "I send you back, St. George, that last bottle of old Madeira, the Black Warrior of 1810—the one you gave me and which we were to share together. I hadn't the heart to drink my half without you, and so here is the whole and my warmest congratulations on your home-coming and long life to you!"

Picking up the quaint bottle, he passed his hand tenderly over its crusted surface, paused for an instant to examine the cork, and held it closer to the light that he might note its condition. There he stood musing, his mind far away, his fingers caressing its sides. All the aroma of

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the past; all the splendor of the old régime—all its good-fellowship, hospitality, and courtesy—that which his soul loved—lay imprisoned under his hand. Suddenly one of his old-time quiz-zical smiles irradiated his face: “By Jove!—just the thing!” he cried joyously; “it will take the place of the one Talbot didn’t open!”

With a mighty jerk of the bell cord he awoke the echoes below stairs.

Todd came on the double quick:

“Todd.”

“Yes, Marse George.”

“Todd, here’s the last bottle of the 1810. Lay it flat on the top shelf with the cork next the wall. We’ll open it at Mr. Harry’s wedding.”

[THE END]

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